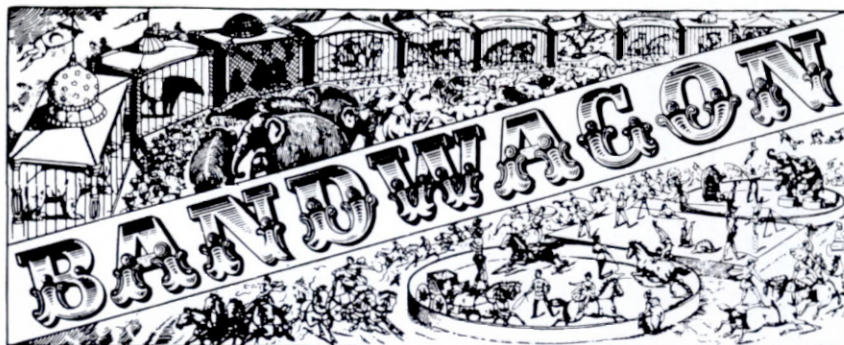




# BANDWAGON

MARCH-APRIL 1985





## THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 29, No. 2

MARCH-APRIL 1985

Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Editor

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor and Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

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### THIS MONTH'S COVER

The carvings from circus parade wagons have been recognized as an important aspect of American folk art in recent years. They have been the subject of scholarly volumes, and displayed in the country's finest art museums. In the rare case when a corner statue goes on the market, it sells for thousands of dollars. Clearly the American circus parade wagon has successfully completed the transition from junk to antique.

This photo of the Lion and Snake wagon was taken before the vehicle became fine art. The wagon was stored at the Peru, Indiana winter quarters of the American Circus Corporation from 1935 until 1944 when it was shipped to Sarasota, Florida to the Ringling-Barnum quarters. It escaped the massive burning of American Circus Corporation wagons in 1941 only because Henry North exempted it and a few others from the bonfire. It is apparent that the wagon was in a state of disrepair at the

time CHS founder Don Smith took this photo, probably in the late 1930s. Built by Bode of Cincinnati for the Carl Hagenbeck Circus in 1905, the Lion and Snake has had a happy destiny of late as last November it was loaned to the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Pfening Archives.

### NEW MEMBERS

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### DO NOT SEND DUES EARLY

CHS Treasurer Edward L. Jones requests that members and subscribers do not send their payments until their dues notice is received. Advance payment causes problems recording the payment. Please send your payment in the self addressed return envelope you receive.

You may show your special appreciation for the *Bandwagon* by becoming a contributing member at \$25 and a sustaining member at \$50. This additional income allows for larger issues.

### New Publication

A new bi-monthly circus magazine *The Performers* has recently begun publication in England. As its title indicates, it runs photos and text of outstanding European and American circus performers, both past and present. The current issue includes well illustrated articles on John Gindl, the long-time Bertram Mills elephant man; ex-Ringling bear trainer Ursula Bottcher; Elvin Bale; and many others. Future stories will feature Charly Baumann, Gunther Gebel-Williams, the Knies, and Gene Mendez. Two editions have appeared thus far, with a third due out shortly. Those wishing to purchase single copies or to subscribe should write *The Performers*; 6 Elizabeth Way; Hanworth, Middlesex, TW13 7Ph England. Single issues are \$4 each, and a subscription is \$24. For airmail, send \$10 extra. Checks are accepted.

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## CHS CONVENTION UPDATE

The annual meeting of the Circus Historical Society, set for Pittsfield, Mass., on June 20-23, will feature the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus set up directly across from the convention hotel, the Berkshire Hilton. The circus will set up on Thursday morning, June 20, and that evening the convention registration desk will open and circus movies, featuring the old Cole and Beatty rail shows, will be shown to celebrate the 50th anniversary of those titles being continuously on the road.

On Friday, special presentations will feature members of the Beatty-Cole show including co-owner John Pugh. A special feature will be veteran Wilson Storey, nephew of the great mixed wild animal trainer Alfred Court, reminiscing about the Court acts on the Ringling show in the 1940s, one of which Storey presented, as well as about his earlier years in Europe. A special Friday luncheon, with guests from the circus, is included in the registration fee as is a circus ticket for Friday evening.

On Saturday, numerous historical papers on circus bands, the Zoological Institute, side show freaks, and other topics will be presented in the lecture gallery of the Berkshire Museum, next to the Hilton. The gala evening banquet will be followed by the third annual auction to benefit the *Bandwagon*. Lasting several hours, this event has been a long-remembered feature of the last two conventions and many members have acquired rare items for their collections. Members are encouraged to bring items with them for donation to the auction or to write the CHS president.

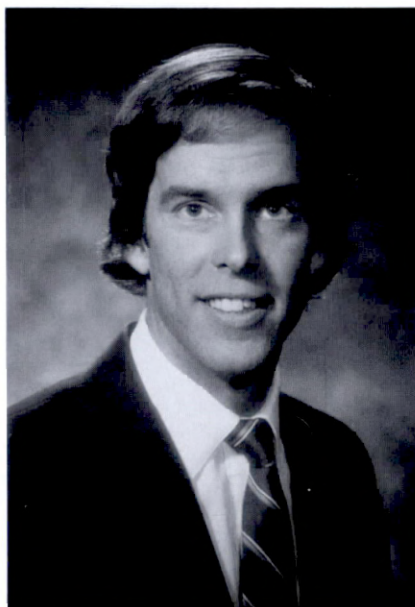
New for 1985 is an optional bus tour on Sunday to the historical sights in and near Somers, N.Y., the cradle of the American circus. The trip, offered to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Zoological Institute, will include stops at the Southeast Museum to see a special exhibit on showmen from the area and at the famous Elephant Hotel to see the several exhibit rooms devoted to the early circus. In addition, a box lunch will be served in Bailey park, directly across the street from the Elephant Hotel. Other sights include Ivandell Cemetery where Hachaliah Baily, Lewis B. Lent, and other circus pioneers are buried; "Morningthorpe," the majestic mansion of Seth B. Howes; and the Gerard Crane estate with its mammoth barn, probably the earliest circus winterquarters still standing. Air-conditioned and rest-room equipped tour buses will depart at 8:45 a.m. and return Sunday evening to the Hilton.

Those planning to attend the 1985 CHS convention are encouraged to promptly complete and return the enclosed registration card with their check. Also enclosed is a direct post card reservation form for the Berkshire Hilton, the convention hotel. For members commuting from a distance, the Albany, N.Y., airport is 45 minutes away but the Hartford/Springfield airport, an additional 30 minutes away, may offer better schedules and prices; both have limou-

sine service to Pittsfield. If you need additional information, write to CHS president and convention chairman Richard Flint, 3751 Beech Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21211.

### Alfred Court Movies Sought

If you know of or have any films of the Alfred Court wild animal acts, presented on the Ringling-Barnum show from 1940-1945, we would like to possibly show them at the 1985 CHS convention when Wilson Storey, Court's nephew and one of his trainers, will speak to those attending. Please write to CHS president Richard Flint, 3751 Beech Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21211.



**Greg Parkinson Named At Circus World Museum**

Long-time CHS member Greg Parkinson was chosen Acting Executive Director of the Circus World Museum by a unanimous vote of the museum's governing board at its February 25 meeting. Parkinson has stated that his top priority will be to increase attendance. A number of new features are planned for the 1985 season, which begins on May 11, including an old-time magic show in the Moeller Hippodrome, a wheelwright shop display, and the Ringling Bell wagon.

Parkinson started at the Circus World Museum as a part time summer employee in the late 1960s, once being the museum's bug man. He has been employed full time since 1978, and has most recently served as program director, and endowment director. Last season he managed the concessions among his other duties. He is well known in the show world, and has published a number of scholarly articles on circus history in both the *Bandwagon* and in Ringling-Barnum programs.

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# The First Mugivan and Bowers Circus Great Van Amburg and Howes Great London Shows

By Gordon M. Carver

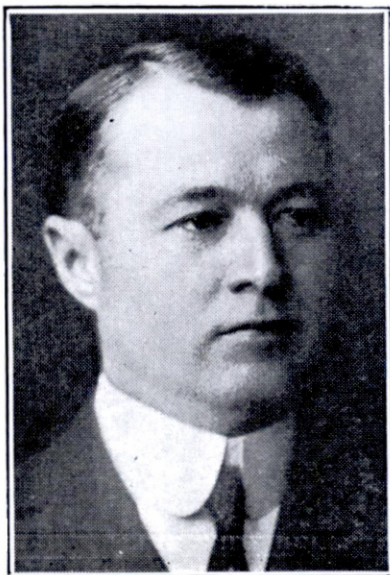
## PART THREE

### Season of 1914

In mid-March the *Billboard* reported that two of the seven Howes Great London Shows coaches had been destroyed in a fire at the Western Railroad shops in Montgomery, Alabama where they were being refurbished for the coming season. One of the two was Jerry Mugivan's private car. Whether his car also served in part as the privilege car we do not know, but we speculate that it may have done so. In any event, Mugivan immediately left for Chicago where he purchased two coaches as replacements.

The *Billboard* had a "call" ad for the show in the April 4 issue. All people engaged were asked to report no later than April 10 for the opening at Montgomery on April 15. Most of the bosses to whom the personnel were to report remained the season, and indicated a moderate turnover in an era when men came and went. Jack Kent, the boss hostler, left early however, and was replaced by Frank Corey. Likewise, when train master C. J. Butts blew the show, he was replaced by Thomas Mackenna. C. J. Peterson was the third boss not finish-

Jerry Mugivan, co-owner and proprietor of the Howe's Great London Shows in 1914.



ing the season; his job was taken over by Owen Bradley.

Among those completing the year were R. H. Dockrill, the equestrian director who was in his fourth season with Howes; and C. H. Tinney who was in his third year as bandmaster, with a band of 19 instruments besides his own. In those days, even on a smaller show such as this, music was very important. A band of this size not only provided excellent music for the big show performance, but also provided two good sized bands of ten instruments each for the parade. With a clown band, side show band and a steam calliope the parade was well furnished with music.

Others who stayed the season were W. H. McFarland in charge of the side show, a position he was to have on many American Circus Corporation side shows in the future; Billy McFarland, in charge of the wild west concert, and L. C. Miller who had the concessions. Harry Sells was in charge of the big top, menagerie top and dressing top canvas, a position he was to hold for many years. J. J. Rogers had the side show canvas and bannerline. The big show props were handled by J. Peterson and the lights, still gas burners, were the responsibility of Charles Keene. Chris Zeitz was in charge of the menagerie and was the elephant trainer. Harry Kelley had the cookhouse. All the ticket sellers were under Dick Jeffries.

Paving the way for the show was an advance crew of two agents, car manager, 14 billposters, bannermen, and lithographers and a chef and porter—19 men. Starting two weeks ahead of the show they had billed it through a few towns in Georgia and then into Tennessee.

In an unusual action the show opened on a Wednesday rather than on a Saturday which meant that there could be no delays in the first teardown of the season with the inexperienced men. This was doubly tricky in that they had a fairly long run that night of 88 miles to West Point, Georgia. But they apparently had no untoward difficulties. This was followed by Marietta and Cartersville, and Rome, all in Georgia. They then moved into a large city, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and then finished out that week in smaller towns in that state and Kentucky. Monday, April 27,

they were in Lexington, Kentucky, another rather good sized city, followed by Shelbyville. They then moved into Indiana at New Albany to be followed by Huntingburg, Tell City and Princeton. To be this far north this early in May was rather unusual routing.

With a route book to help us we know that there were a sizeable number of performers with the show, but no program was given and no review of the show appeared in any show publications, so we can only guess at what the performance was like. All told there were 37 men and 15 ladies in the dressing rooms for a total of 52 performers. This was a sizeable troupe. In this group were a few names that either were already well established in the circus world or would become so. Besides R. H. Dockrill, the Equestrian Director, there was Cecil Lowande and his wife, Hattie McCree, Marie Meers and Billie Melrose, all bareback riders of more or less renown. Some others were the aerial Hands, Alma and Ray; the Nelson Brothers, comedy acrobats, later with the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey show; and Grover McCabe whose name 25 years later was well known on Cole Bros. Circus. The Uyeno troupe of Japanese acrobats were also later

Bert Bowers, co-owner of Howe's Great London, was with Robinson Famous Shows in 1914.





graduated to the Ringling-Barnum and other big shows. Albert Powell, aerialist, also later moved up to the top, as did Bert Fisher, comic acrobat. Most of the other names in the roster were those of average performers who gave a satisfactory performance but did not make names for themselves.

The week of May 4 was spent in Indiana and Ohio playing all good sized towns, the smallest being Bedford having 11,000, while the largest was Hamilton having 35,000. The following week was spent entirely in Ohio playing somewhat smaller towns, the largest being Massillon with 16,000 people. The week of May 18 they started in Ohio but on Friday 22 they moved into Pennsylvania at Greenville followed by Grove City. They finished out May back in Ohio with the last day of the month moving into Wyandotte, Michigan, the last stop in the U.S. On Monday June 1 they were in Canada where they stayed through July 1. In Canada they played almost entirely in the smaller towns.

The wild west aftershow was managed by W. H. McFarland's son, W. H. McFarland, Jr. He had 12 persons working for him including two ladies. They were a rough bunch with half of them going by such monikers as Melrose Bill, the Texas Kid, with one of the girls being Prairie Lillie. One name that was later to become very well known was Ken Maynard, then just a first of May.

The side show was a large operation. J. J. Rogers, the boss canvasman, had 19 workers. But it must be remembered that on this show as on most shows big and small all stakes had to be hand driven which would in some measure account for this number of canvasmen. Incidentally, none of these men got more than transportation and meals (which were ample) and \$2 or \$3 a week. The pay of even the boss canvasman was probably only about \$20 per week. So while the numbers may seem large the expenses were not.

The side show itself was typical for that size show in that era. There was, of course, a band of 12 instruments, and a minstrel show of 7 people, much larger than a show of this size 60 years later would have. But they also had to ride and play on a bandwagon in the parade. Also typical were four girls, oriental dancers, or strippers as we would call them today, together with two men, "Turkish" musicians, who played a flageolet, a cross between an oboe and flute, and a bass drum. The music provided for the dancing of the girls, which was done behind a curtain for an extra fee, was wierd sounding and not like anything the average small town American male had heard before. This music together with the complete nudity of the girls in those towns where the proper palms had been greased certainly was erotic in the extreme.

The rest of the side show was the usual for this size of show. There were



L.A. Sadler Collection.

## THE LION AND GLADIATOR TABLEAU

Newly available information proves that the Lion and Gladiator tableau was built earlier than was known when Joe Bradbury published its history in the September-October 1963 *Bandwagon*. In a 1921 interview in *Billboard* Jerry Mugivan stated that he and Bert Bowers purchased three new tableaus during the winter of 1910-1911. One of these was the Lion and Gladiator. It was on Howe's Great London Shows in 1912 as shown in this photograph, and probably remained there until the 1915 season when it was moved to the Robinson Famous Shows, another Mugivan and Bowers troupe. The late Marion Organ took a photo of the wagon on Robinson Famous at Wilmington, Ohio on May 5, 1915. The wagon was presumably on the show in 1916, and was definitely on John Robinson in 1917 where it remained until 1923. In 1924 it was moved to Sells Floto. After traveling

with the Floto show in 1925 the wagon was placed in storage at the Peru winter quarters.

The Lion and Gladiator was not used again until 1934 when it and a number of other fine old parade wagons rolled in the grand parade of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. Following that season, the wagon remained in storage until 1944 when it, and a few others which also escaped the big wagon burning at Peru in 1941, was shipped to the Ringling-Barnum quarters in Sarasota. It was equipped with rubber tired wheels and used in the 1945 Ringling-Barnum spec. In 1958 it was placed on loan to the Ringling Museum of the Circus in Sarasota where it was fitted with sunburst wheels. It remained at the Ringling Museum until around 1982 when it was removed by the Ringling show and placed in storage in nearby Bradenton. In November 1984 the Lion and Gladiator was loaned to the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin where it is now being restored. Fred D. Pfening Jr.

the LaVells who gave both a musical act and a marionette show. This was in addition to a Punch and Judy show given by Prof. Lavere who also did the inside presentations of the various acts—he was called the lecturer. Mrs. McFarland had an act called the "Flying Woman," probably an illusion of sorts. There was also another illusion called "The Electrical Woman" which used Polly, no last name given, as the person from whom sparks were emitted. A wild man acted by a black man just called Shine who was probably one of the canvasmen making a couple of bucks on the side. Carlos and sister in a knife throwing act, and Al Derby, bag puncher, were others in the show. Dottie Asal, mind reader and Princess Carmen, snake charmer, both oldtimers

with the show, completed the line-up. Including two men in the ticket boxes outside, the total roster of the show was 60 persons. While the admission fee for the show may have been 25¢ it must be remembered that wages were small compared to later days and for most of the performers in \$12-15 range per week.

Thursday July 2 found the show back in the States at Berlin, New Hampshire. The show then moved into Maine for almost the entire month being at Bath, Lewiston, Waterville, Bangor, Augusta and Portland after which it moved back into New Hampshire for a stop at Dover on July 30, then going into Massachusetts at Haverhill on July 31. Then came August at South Farmington and Adams where a full inventory of the





show was made by the father of CHS member Don Marcks.

The show arrived from South Farmington Sunday morning at 8 o'clock in one section of 20 cars and unloaded across the street from the lot. In many of the small towns shows like Howes played, it was not unusual for a lot to be found within a block or two from the point of unloading. For this reason horses were important mostly for moving the wagons on the lot and for the parade.

In Adams, according to Issac Marcks' count, there were 8 flats, 5 stocks and 7 coaches, for the above mentioned 20 cars. It is possible that the count of 7 coaches was in error for the route book lists only 6 by name—Scotland 122, Canada 123, Great Britian 124, Germany 118, Africa 119 and England 120—together with the names of the porters servicing them. However, it also lists six other persons—steward, day clerk, night clerk, two porters and laundry agent—who were not assigned to any named car, so there might have been a seventh car which was the privileged car which had no name or number.

All the cars were painted yellow as were all the wagons. While this color for the cars is not surprising, yellow was an unusual color for circus wagons. The eight flat cars, all 60 foot wooden cars, carried 32 wagons listed as follows:

- Cookhouse
- Cookhouse and water
- Blacksmith
- Horse tops
- Side show canvas and poles
- Side shows trunks, reserved seat ticket wagon
- Calliope
- Office
- 9 cages (probably 3 or 4 were cross cages)
- Menagerie top canvas
- 2 trunks (tab wagons)
- Props
- Reserved seats (star backs)
- Blue seats
- 2 star back seats and ring curbs
- Stringers
- Jacks
- Big top canvas
- Dressing top canvas
- Poles

The Donaldson Litho Co. designed and printed this letterhead for the Howe's show. It was first used around 1911. The animals and title outline are in gold with red background. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives except where noted.

Stake and chain  
Lights (gas)

The show had quite a substantial parade of 14 vehicles with the 9 cages, three tableau wagons on which rode two big show bands and one side show band, plus a clown band on one of the

**(Season of 1914.)**  
**HOWE'S GREAT LONDON SHOWS**  
**AT Columbia**  
**Saturday, Sept. 5**

Full of Honors and Wonderful Triumphs of its Long, Conquering Tours of the Continent, and presented on a Scale of Colossal Magnitude and Lavish Expenditure never known before in this country.

**THE TRAVELING AMUSEMENT SENSATION OF THE DAY.**

**DRIMMING OVER WITH MIRTH AND OF JOY.**

**75 CLOWNS**  
**80 LEAPERS**  
**100 ACROBATS**  
**KENTUCKY HORSES.**

**250 HORSES.**  
**400 PEOPLE.**  
**The Dublin Grays.**  
**The Black Hussars.**

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**Many times the Biggest and Most Bewildering Production ever in America. Most Stupendously Stirring Spectacle that Human Eyes Ever Witnessed.**

**AFTERNOON AT 2 - NIGHT AT 8**  
**GRAND GORGEE PARADE AT 10 A.M.**

cages, the steam calliope together with the ornately carved office wagon. There were, of course, several mounted groups including 13 wild west riders. The lead animals were six elephants, and five camels. With five stock cars, one of which carried the elephants and camels, the show probably had 105-110 horses of which possibly 70 were draft horses and 35-40 were performing horses of one sort or another.

We have no idea of the size of any of the tops so what the show looked like on the lot remains something of a mystery. We do know there were eight tents. These consisted of the big top which based on other shows of this size was probably a 120 foot round with three 50 foot middles. There were also a menagerie top, side show top, as well as dressing top, ring stock top, two draft stock tops, a cookhouse top and dining top. There were also various small tents for the concessions, blacksmith and others.

After leaving Adams the show moved quickly west through New York at Amsterdam on August 4, followed by Rome, Oswego, and Lockport, all good sized towns, into Ohio at Montpelier on August 10. Two more small Ohio towns got the show into Indiana for four stops including Frankfort on August 17. Then came thirteen dates in Illinois of which the principal ones were Chicago Heights on the 20th, and Ottawa on the 25th. The show arrived in Missouri at Hannibal September 2 after which came Columbia on the 5th, and Moberly on the 7th.

Going back to the horses on the show, for the 105-110 there were listed in the roster the boss, his assistant, a veterinarian and 41 men. This may seem like an unusually large number of men for the job—about one man for every two or three horses. Possibly three of the men were blacksmiths and their helpers. Another one for each of the three tents might have been needed to handle the hay, straw and grain. If there were 35 ring stock another 10 or 12 hostlers might have been used for that work. Finally there were probably 14 drivers with perhaps brakemen assigned to half of the drivers, those with the larger teams handling the heavier wagons. With these jobs we can pretty easily add up to the 41 men. It is something of an eye opener to see the amount of labor needed to get a show this size moved.

Another large crew was canvasmen. Here in addition to Harry Sells and two assistants there were 39 men listed. This also seems like a large number of men to be responsible for the menagerie and big tops. However, we must remember that there were virtually no labor saving devices. All the stakes had to be driven by hand. While four crews

Newspaper ad used in Columbia, Mo., from the September 5, 1914 stand of the Howe's show.



of five men each could probably drive the stakes for the big top faster than could one mechanical stake driver, it did mean that 20 men rather than two or three were required.

To unload the flats of the 32 wagons the show had a crew of 17 men. Again this seems like a slightly larger number than needed for this job, but we have no answer. The property department also had another large crew, particularly because there was little or no heavy aerial apparatus or arena to move. Here we had listed besides the boss 16 men. The menagerie crew had eight men under Chris Zeitz. Others of interest were five men to take care of the gas lights. On the other hand seven men for the candy stands seems like, for a lucrative part of the business, not too many. But then there were also 14 others called concessionaires who perhaps handled the sales in the big top, and maybe the games of chance in the side show.

Finally we come to the dining department, in some ways the most important department on the show, if the show was not to run short handed. H. L. Kelly was in charge of this operation with an assistant, three cooks, and a campfire man. All large kettle cooking and the heating of water was done, literally, out in the open over a campfire. Only the large shows had boiler wagons for this purpose. For whatever reason, the calliope fireman was also attached to this department. There were 20 waiters, 10 on the workmen's side and 10 on the performers and bosses side. Exclusive of the 27 people in the dining department they had to cook for and serve about 320 people at each meal. This was about typical for a 20 car show.

On September 12 the show entered Kansas at Horton and quickly moved through that state and Oklahoma, where they made only one stop, Guyman on the 19th, and then moved into Texas. They stayed there through the end of September playing small towns,

mostly under 5,000. On October 1 they moved into Oklahoma at Altus. Six towns in Oklahoma and one in Kansas followed after which came four dates in Arkansas. The show then entered Missouri October 15 at Poplar Bluff followed by three more towns in that state. The show then traveled 332 miles to arrive in Peru, Indiana where they wintered.

During the 1914 season they showed in 174 towns and cities, and blew four, St. Anselme and La Prairie in Quebec and Carrolton and Cameron in Missouri. They missed four half days at Nicholasville, Kentucky, Hagersville and Beauceville, Ontario and McGhee, Arkansas. They exhibited in two provinces of Canada and 19 states, traveling 11,343 miles. The longest run was 344 miles and the shortest 8 miles.

### Season of 1915

For reasons not now known Howes Great London Shows was not as "Great" in 1915 as it had been in 1914. Traveling on 21 cars, including the advance, in 1914, this year it was dropped five cars and went out on only 16, one advance, five coaches, six flats and five stocks. And of course, the staff was greatly reduced.

The nature of the route was also significantly different. Only thirteen towns larger than 10,000 were visited and only thirty others over 5,000. This meant that in a long season, lasting from April 21 through November 3, there were 127 towns under 5,000 that saw the show. What, we can now wonder, caused such a marked change? It was very unusual for a circus to reduce its size, and we surmise that the previous year had been less than successful.

The show opened not at its winter

**This painted tableau wagon carried the big show band in the Howe's parade in this 1915 photo. Albert Conover Collection.**

quarters town of Peru but in another town, which years later served as the winter quarters for Cole Bros. Circus, Rochester, 42 miles distant. This was followed by Huntington, one of the over 10,000 sized towns. Then they moved into Ohio. The advance for the show was headed by George Aiken, General Agent, and A.B. Bennett, contractor. Frank Myers was manager of the car with only eight billers of various sorts compared to 14 the year before.

The rest of April was spent in towns over 5,000 except for Crestline, Ohio. Beaver Falls was one of the larger towns as the show moved into Pennsylvania, as were Connellsville on May 6, McKeesport on the 11th, Homestead on the 12th, and Braddock on the 13th. The show then turned westward into Ohio again at Lancaster on May 17. This was the last of the large towns the show played until June 3 at Lincoln, Illinois, and LaSalle on the 7th. Starting Wisconsin June 11 at Platteville it spent six days in that state including Lancaster, Saturday June 12, where only one show was given. The reason for blowing the night performance was given in an after-blast that appeared in the Lancaster newspaper on Wednesday June 16. The article read as follows:

Howe's London show has come and gone, has left a good impression in Lancaster. Although it is one of the oldest shows on the road, it is doubtful if Wisconsin has ever before seen it. Its habitat is in the east, and there it has done its showing these many years. But, if it ever again ventures into Lancaster, the proprietors are certain of a full tent, for those who braved the threatening storm and saw the afternoon performance spoke very highly of it.

To begin with, the parade was finely organized and perfectly executed. There were attractions enough in that parade for a much more pretentious show, and every feature in the parade meant something in the show that was to open at 2:30 in the afternoon. And under the big "round-top" every promise made in the procession was fully redeemed. Those handsome horses were there, each doing his part.

That herd of four elephant was exceedingly fine. Seldom are better trained animals witnessed. But the horses furnished the attractions. Fat, sleek and happy in their several parts they were indeed entertaining. Next to the horses, the acrobats and trapeze performers lead in quality. And the atmosphere in the top of the big old tent was well filled with aerial artists the most of the time. A band Japs did some husky tumbling and juggling.







While all this was going on a splendid band discoursed appropriate music. The one weak point was in clowns—they were not funny. But they could do tumbling; there were so many of them that they tumbled over each and still were foolish. From first to last the show was high toned, clean, interesting and inspiring. The afternoon crowd was good. No performance in the evening, by reason of bad storm that broke over the city at 6:30 and deluged the show grounds.

An earlier article in the Lancaster paper told of the train arriving from Neenah at seven in the morning, with four palace cars for horses, six flat cars and five passenger cars. It added that some of the passenger cars were sort of sleepers.

The rest of June was spent in Minnesota with only one moderately sized town, Fairbault, played on the 25th. Six other towns were under 2,000 in population, and one Elk River on the 28th, having only 859 people. These small villages of under 1,000 that the show occasionally played are a puzzle.

**Blacksmith shop on Howe's Great London in 1915. This was an essential part of all shows prior to wide use of trucks.**

There were eight of them during the 1915 season.

The staff was headed by Jerry Mugivan with Mrs. Mugivan in charge of reserved seat tickets. Harry Sells was again big top canvas boss. Others who were again with the show were Jack Kent, veterinarian; Frank Corry, boss of stock; and Tom McKenna, trainmaster. However, new to the show were Fred Shafer, properties; Jack Nelson, side show canvas; Dick Jeffries, candy stands; Tom Newton, in charge of the menagerie, replacing Chris Zeitz. H.L. Kelly was cookhouse steward. While there were a number of returnees, in total there were more newcomers.

On July 10 the show was in Marshfield, Wisconsin, it having entered that state on the 6th at New Richmond. At Marshfield the reviewer from the *Bill-*

**This parade wagon with the clown band on top appears to be the ticket wagon. The sign refers to the Sparks Circus, that was to play Marshfield, Wis., the following day in 1915.**



*board* caught the show and gave it some of the best coverage the show had in that publication. The writer noted that while the weather was good on the day he visited, of the 60 days on the road they had had rain on 25. The lot was a mile out of town and attendance in the afternoon was only fair and at night rather light, "although the day as a whole was profitable." This statement makes us wonder if the "lucky boys" were carrying the show. The writer goes on to say that he had looked over the books "and even during some wet days the business has been surprisingly good and can definitely state that the Howe show has pulled through remarkably well."

The *Billboard* representative saw both performances of the side show and main show and was "impressed with the fact that Jerry Mugivan is giving good value for the money, that he is running his show on the basis that will make it profitable for return dates." This latter statement makes it sound as though short changing and other "lucky boy" operations, while probably not eliminated, may have been greatly curtailed.

The reviewer did not give a detailed outline of the performance. "While there naturally is not a great collection of big acts there are no poor or even mediocre performers. One could not ask for better riders than Cecil Lowande and Nettie Greer. R.H. Dockrill's menage horses are as good as there are in the business; the Secino Troupe (2) on the wire and as acrobats are well up to the top; the Uyeno Troupe of Japs and that most charming little performer, Tetu Robinson, are not excelled by any in the country. The Hands (2) and the Nelsons (2) are strictly high class; and Dunlap's four elephant act is deservedly a strong feature. William Ashton, producing clown, has a dozen [actually, including Kenneth Waite, only about five] assistants who do really better clowning than with most shows of this size."

Others who we know were with the show but not mentioned in the above review, were Mr. and Mrs. Archie Silverlake, a name that was later to become well known as operators of small shows in the mid-west. The Warner Family (3) and Ed Millette, aerialist, were also in the show. As suggested by the reviewer this was not a large group of performers and the thought occurs that the performance may have been given in only one ring, although we have no proof of this. There was also a wild west concert of seven people.

July was spent in Minnesota for four days, and then nine days in Wisconsin again. The Howes show was in West Bend, Wisconsin, on July 14 when the local paper told of the show's visit:

Howe's Great London Shows, which exhibited in West Bend on Wednesday, were first class in



every respect and pleased a fair sized crowd in the afternoon and a filled tent in the evening. The circus was a pleasant surprise to all who attended, the people having been duped so often by small circus companies that Wednesday's performances gave them assurance that there are some companies that really give one his money's worth. Neither the Ringling nor the Barnum shows have anything on the Howe's, except that the big fellows have more of a menagerie. However, in the way of performers, the Howe people more than hold their own, and many of their feats are superior to anything shown by the two and three train circuses. It was a clean-cut show by clean-cut people. It would be an injustice to criticise any part of the show unless it be the concert or wild west after show. The Japs were particularly pleasing in their marvelous feats, the wire performers were excellent, turning, tumbling and trapeze feats could not be improved upon, while the clowns were so ridiculous as to be amusing. Howe's circus can come to this city again and if it comes two crowded tents will welcome the performers. The show was also quite free from the rough stuff which usually goes with a circus. A few short-change stunts were pulled off, but when Policeman Held called the attention of the managers to these acts the money was returned promptly. The circus train pulled into the city shortly before 6 o'clock in the morning, and quite a few of our youngsters, and grown-ups as well, were at the depot yards to watch the unloading. This was done with clock-like precision, and in but a few hours the monster tents were up on the fair grounds. At 12:30 there was a street parade, but owing to the impassable condition of Main street the parade moved only along some of the back streets. The circus train got out of the city on Thursday morning at about 4 o'clock, leaving for Port Washington.

The show went into Illinois for four days, Indiana for three and Michigan for six. In this period they again played some large towns such as Neenah, Waukegan, Gary, Michigan City and Mishawaka. The show continued to play in Michigan in August through the 23rd with the largest town being Grand Haven on the 19th. This was followed by one stand in Indiana at Butler on the 24th, a very small town. August was closed out in Ohio with the largest town being Norwalk. September started with one stand back in Indiana at Union City



Three of the Howe's Great London lithographs were reproduced in the 1915 herald. The lithos were printed by the Donaldson Co.

on the 1st, followed by twelve towns in Ohio including Portsmouth, the largest town played by the show that year and the last one over 10,000. The rest of the month was spent in small towns in West Virginia except for Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania on the 18th and Martins Ferry, Ohio on the 20th. Moundsville, Clarksburg, and Grafton were the only towns of any size in West Virginia that the show visited.

The show got into a mid-summer shortage of help and for the first time in several years mid-season want ads appeared in the *Billboard*. At the end of June the side show needed colored musicians and an inside lecturer who could do Punch and Judy and magic. Also needed was a man to take care of the wardrobe for parade and spec. They also had the balloon, cane and whip privileges to rent. But in spite of the shortages of help in the side show at Buffalo, Minnesota, July 5, the side show manager, McFarland, stated they had 1,602 people going through the door at 25¢ each for a take of \$400.50.

The big show band is pictured on a painted tableau wagon in the Howe's parade in Lincoln, Ill., on June 3, 1915. Circus World Museum Collection.



the largest in his career. A picture, not reproducible, of the "tip" in front of the side show bannerline that day appeared in the July 24 *Billboard*.

At the end of July they were still in need of a cornet and baritone for the big show band. Since with the leader they only had fifteen musicians, about five less than in 1914, a shortage of two would be felt more. They also wanted performers and clowns. The side show was also short, needing a cornet and comedian for the minstrel band, a snake charmer with her own snakes, a novelty act and an oriental dancer. They were still looking for a wardrobe man that they had wanted a month earlier. It is interesting that by season's end they still had not acquired a wardrobe man. They also needed a man to take charge of the lunch counter in the privilege car. And finally they were short of working men in all departments.

The route for October was entirely in towns of less than 5,000 population with seventeen of them being under 2,000 and four under 1,000. Also in this period a number of performances were lost, maybe because they were short handed. The first day of October in Front Royal, Virginia, was cancelled and at Shenandoah, on the 4th, for reasons not indicated, only one show was given. The next day at Buchanan with 792 people only one show was advertised. Then two days later Clarksville



with a population of 794 was cancelled all together. On Monday 11 only one show was given at Scotland Neck, North Carolina and Easley on the 20th was cancelled. After eight Georgia stands at the end of October and two in November the show closed the season at Eufaula 3, Alabama.

The show then moved into Montgomery where it again spent the winter with its sister circus Robinson's Famous Shows. At the end of the season the side show had a sword swallower; musical act; Punch and Judy; Cuban Mack, a Hindoo Juggler; a fortune teller; the Gonzaley's knife throwers; and Aga, the flying woman. There were also the oriental dancers, three of them—two being wives of the ticket sellers on the front and two oriental musicians. The side show band also put on a minstrel show with seven instruments and two comedians-dancers.

### Season of 1916

After spending the winter in Montgomery at Vandiver Park they opened there on Tuesday, April 4. But before that in the March 11 *Billboard* side show manager W.H. McFarland still needed freaks, novelty acts, Turkish musicians for the dancing girls, and a colored alto player who could double as a comedian. Whether McFarland got the show people he needed we do not know. But with or without them the show took to the road. The route called for the show to move 105 miles to Blockton after the opening, but because of slowness in making the first tear-down and loading the show decided to skip the planned stop there and moved on another 35 miles to Bessemer which became the actual first road stop as advertised for Thursday 6.

To get the show on the the road and to keep the people coming to see it Howes Great London Shows enlarged their advance crew. With the enlarged show back up to its former 21 car size this was necessary. There were now 24 on the advance crew including E.C. Knapp, General Agent, the man who routed the show; and an assistant who was later became well known in the field, A.R. Hopper. There were also two special agents as well as the advance car manager, F.J. Bates. Working out of the advance car were three bannermen, two lithographers and eleven billposters including Tom West, the boss. On the car there was also a chef, paste maker and porter.

The show moved quickly north through Alabama, Tennessee and Kentucky into Virginia where they arrived on April 21. Some of the larger towns played in this quick move north were besides Bessemer, Gadsden, Anniston, Knoxville and Bristol. Entering Virginia at Pulaski on the 21st, they stopped at Roanoke, Lynchburg and Staunton. April was completed at Hagerstown, Maryland, on the 29th.

Never Divided! Never Changes Dates! Never Exaggerated! New Shows! New People! New Features! Best Shows! Best Equipment!

# HOWE'S GREAT LONDON SHOWS



## Triple Menagerie

30-CAGES AND DENS OF EVERY KNOWN WILD ANIMAL-30

Trained Elephants		Group Lions
Trained Lions		Group Tigers
Trained Tigers		Group Leopards
Trained Horses		Group Camels
Trained Ponies		Group Zebras
Trained Pigs		Group Antelopes
Trained Goats		Group Jaguars
Trained Monkeys		Group Hyenas
		Apes, Monkeys, etc.

This four page courier was used in 1915 and was printed by the Standard Printing Co. of St. Paul, Minn.

May started in Cumberland on the 1st after which the show moved into Pennsylvania playing among other towns Uniontown, Homestead, Monessen, and McKees Rock. Ohio came next starting at Painesville with other stops being Lima, Mansfield and Piqua. Next came Indiana and Illinois with the show moving rapidly toward the upper mid-west. Marion was the first town there followed by Hammond, Joliet, Rockford, followed by one Iowa town Dubuque on the 26th and then into Wisconsin for one stop at LaCrosse the next day. Next came Preston, Minnesota, as a small town for one performance only on Monday followed by Winona and Red Wing.

The staff of the show was, as might be expected for a bigger show than in 1915, somewhat larger. For the first time we see the name Jess Adkins at-

The performers of the Howe's show gave a special show for the convicts of the Indiana State Penitentiary in Michigan City on July 23, 1915.



tached to a Mugivan-Bowers show. He started the season as the treasurer of the show but resigned on June 5 at Webster, South Dakota, for reasons unknown. He was replaced by L.D. Thilman who had been associated with Mugivan and Bowers shows for several years. Another name on the show who later held other positions of authority in the circus business was Sylvester Cronin, advertising solicitor. Ed Brown held a new job on the show General Lot Superintendent, and Harry Sells was again in charge of the big top canvas and J.J. Rogers in charge of the side show canvas. Other returnees were Jack Kent in charge of stock, W.T. Newton, menagerie and elephants, Tom McKenna, train and Ray Kidwell, tickets. Names new to the show were William Carrol, cookhouse; R.N. Wilkins, properties; and George Davis, concessions.

June opened in Minnesota for one show only at Glencoe. Also at Webster only one show was advertised. Both of these towns had less than 2,000 people living there. The next date Groton, South Dakota, was missed for reasons not known. Aberdeen was one of the larger towns visited. Then on Monday June 12 another tiny hamlet was shown for an afternoon only. Back in Minnesota and Wisconsin they began to play some larger towns, Little Falls, Superior, Duluth, Virginia, Ashland and Ironwood. During this period they also had the shortest run of the season, five miles, from Superior to Duluth.

July started with three dates in Wisconsin after which the show moved into Michigan where it stayed through the 25th after which the month was finished out in Indiana. The larger towns played during this time were Green Bay, Calumet, Ishpenning, Marquette, Sault Ste. Marie, Traverse City and Wabash.

August found the show rapidly moving south starting in Illinois, with a single date in Indiana at Vincennes on the 7th, through Missouri, Kansas and winding up the month in Oklahoma. Few large towns were played during this time. Other than Vincennes mentioned above they were in Mt. Vernon, Cape Girardeau, Webb City, Pittsburg and Emporia. Fifteen of the twenty-seven towns stopped at this month were under 5,000 in population.

Nowhere have we been able to find any material that tells us what the big show performance was. All that we have is a list of the performers. Besides John Welsh's band of twenty instruments, including Ray Choisser on the air calliope, and a wild west group of eleven there were 66 artists and performers including R. H. Dockrill, equestrian director and his assistant Cecil Lowande making a grand total of 97 people directly involved in the activities in the big top. Among these were the Uyeno troupe of Japanese acrobats,





The air calliope with an eight pony hitch, in the Howe's Great London parade, Hattiesburg, Miss. on Nov. 29, 1916.

seven in number, and the George Hamid troupe of 14 arab tumblers. Some other names that were to become, if not already, well known were Albert Powell and his wife, son and two daughters, three Corrieas, four Warners, George McCabe, Steve Miaco, the three Secisso Brothers and others. As the show had always in the past given a very satisfactory performance we can be sure that this season was no different.

As information about the performance is non-existent data on the show's physical make up is much the same. One aspect of it is strange in that, after some years, even when a smaller show, of having five and sometimes six elephants, the herd that year was down to three, all new to the show. The elephants were Mama, Ding and Mabel who had been on Mugivan & Bowers Famous Robinson show in 1915. T. H. Newton was in charge of the elephants and the menagerie. He had ten men to help him. We can only assume that with a crew of this size and only three elephants there must have been some camels and other lead stock and probably eight or nine cages of which probably about half were small cross cages.

The side show was again under the direction of W.H. McFarland. There were eighteen persons in the tent plus nine piece "Georgia Minstrel" band and entertainers. For the first time in several years the name of Dottie Asal was not listed among the performers. Also there was a first for this show, an outside pit show on the midway, "Mysterious Zorna," managed by Ray Dailey. He also lectured about Zorna about which we have not an inkling as to whether it was man, woman or beast. We can only speculate that it was some type of "wild woman," a type of show that was then becoming popular on the smaller circuses.

We now get down to the last three months of the season. With the exception of San Angelo and Amarillo, Texas, September 10 and 25, all the September towns, ten in Texas, four in New Mexico and five in Oklahoma were small, Octo-

ber found much the same kind of route with quite small towns under 5,000 in Oklahoma, Arkansas and Missouri ending at Holly Springs, Mississippi and Bolivar, Tennessee. Pine Bluff on the 20th was the exception to the small towns. However, Steelville, Missouri, and Cotter, Arkansas, each had only one show while Newport and New Augusta, both in Arkansas, were missed completely. The last month of the season, November, started off with very small towns, four in Tennessee, four in Arkansas, and two in Oklahoma. Then came three days in Arkansas with only two shows given, one at Mansfield, none at Booneville and one at Benton. Whether the weather was bad, or the show was short handed, or the staff was just running out of "steam" as the season drew to a close we don't know. Perhaps the territory was just poor. Then in the last two weeks the show played a few larger towns with apparently better success, Bastrop, Monroe, in Louisiana, Natchez, Hattiesburg and Laurel in Mississippi, followed in December by Columbia, Gulfport and Brewton in Alabama, which ended the season.

After closing at Brewton the show moved to Americus, Georgia, where it wintered. The mileage covered by the show was somewhat greater than in previous years, 14,417 miles with 37 runs of over 100 miles, unusual for the show. There were also two deaths

**The Howe's Great London advance car is shown in Vincennes, Ind., two weeks ahead of the August 7, 1916 stand. F.J. Bates was car manager.**



Cage No. 20 on the Howe's lot with the "Mysterious Zorna" midway attraction in the background.

during the season, both performers, Zukicki Sawada on September 8, and Lulu Collins on October 21. This was to be the last season for the show until 1920 because of railroad transportation difficulties caused by the war.

### Season of 1920

When Howes Great London Circus went into winter quarters at Americus, Georgia, no thought was in the minds of the personnel that it would not take to the road in the spring of 1917. But with the war raging in Europe as 1917 dawned it seemed only a matter of time before the U.S. would be drawn in. And to be sure on April 6 President Wilson declared the U.S. at war with Germany. But before that the railroads were becoming increasingly busy carrying material to the eastern ports for shipment overseas. With the U.S. entry into the conflict it became evident that all the railroad shows would have a difficult time moving about. So it was that Mugivan and Bowers decided that the smallest of their shows should not take to the road in 1917.

Thus for 1917-19 the Mugivan and Bowers operations were reduced with only their John Robinson Circus going out. Why they did not reopen Howes in 1919 we don't know. However, with the coming of 1920 they did have Howes Great London Shows back on tour, but only on 15 cars, one advance, four stocks, six flats and four coaches, one of





Tableau no. 29 with the second half of the big show band passing the Mighty Sheesley carnival set up five blocks from the circus lot in Hattiesburg in 1916.

which was in part a dining-privilege car. Sometime after its closing in 1916 and moving into quarters in Americus, Georgia, all their equipment was moved to Peru, Indiana, where it remained until the 1920 opening.

On April 10, 1920 the advance car with Manager Al Clarkson moved into Huntington, Indiana, to bill the opening of the season there for April 24. Bert Rutherford as general agent had laid out a route which took the show into Canada, then to upper New England and finally back through the mid-west and down into the mid-south. To paper the towns on this route and to arrange for all the show-day necessities, the advance, besides two contracting agents, had on the car a programmer, boss billposter, six billposters, two lithographers, a porter and a chef. A couple of days ahead of the show came the checker-up to make sure that all the advertising that had been put on fences and store windows and elsewhere was still up. If it was not the passes which had been given out were invalidated and anyone who presented a pass under these circumstances would find that their passes would not get them into the show. The total advance, agents and billers, was 17 men.

The route took the show into Ohio immediately after the opening where it stayed through May 12. Dover April 30, Cambridge May 4, Portsmouth on the 8th and East Liverpool on the 12th were a few of the towns visited in that initial period. Then came eight towns in Pennsylvania including Carnegie, Homestead and Vandergrift followed by Towanda, New York, after which the show entered Canada. It was on May 26 at Dunnville, Ontario, that Louis D. Thilman, the assistant manager and treasurer, a long time employee of Mugivan and Bowers was killed. Joe "Hamburger Joe" Alpert, a candy butcher angry about being shorted in his accounts, shot Thilman in the ticket wagon at 8:45 p.m. just after the evening show had gotten under way. He tried to escape but was followed and

after some gun play was shot, captured and later died of his wounds.

The entire month of June was spent in Canada in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. A few of the towns in which the show exhibited there were Oshawa, Napanee, Brockville, Lachine, Chatham and Picton. While in Canada the Howe show met opposition from the Sparks show. They returned to the U.S. at Princeton, Maine, on July 4.

At Princeton they celebrated Independence Day with a big feed in the cookhouse. The ability of a show of this size with its limited facilities to prepare such a meal as this is always surprising. There were radishes, young onions, olives and lettuce to start followed by Fulton Market (New York) clam chowder and then fresh cod with egg sauce. There were three entrees, Virginia ham with spinach, roast beef au jus with brown potatoes and stewed milk fed chicken with dumplings. Four vegetables were available—creamed new potatoes, celery, sweet corn and baked apples. The desserts were wine cake, strawberries with cream or chocolate cake.

In North Adams, Massachusetts Issac Marcks visited the show and left a good report. Besides the railroad cars enumerated above, there was a four pole big top with three 40 foot middles with one row of quarter poles. The menagerie top was a 60 foot round with two 30 foot middles. The menagerie had six cages, 4 elephants, 4 camels and a sacred cow. The caged animals were a

**Howe's Great London Shows 1920 mid-way showing the ZaZa pit show, big top, menagerie and side show bannerline.**



The baggage wagons of the 1916 Howe's show did not carry the show's title.

bear, deer, monkeys, tiger, lion cubs and two lions. There were also a Cracker Jack stand and an ice cream stand.

The side show top was a 50 foot round with two 30 foot middles. The show, managed by Charles Curran, consisted of a ten piece band and minstrels, four dancing girls, a magician who was also the assistant manager of the side show and inside lecturer. Madame Asal was back as mind reader, as were a comedy juggler, a man with two toes and two fingers, a snake charmer and an untameable lion act by Capt. Paul. This was the seventh cage on the show. It is interesting that by season's end this roster had changed considerably. Surprisingly the dancing girls were gone as were the snake charmer and the two toed-two fingered man. New were three Camerons, Scotch Bagpipers, ventriloquist and Punch and Judy; a tattooed man; a harpist, a rather unusual act for a side show; and impersonators. There were three acts lost and six gained so at the end of the season the side show was a better buy than at the beginning.

The other tents on the lot were a dressing and ring stock top, two draft stock tops, dining top, cook top and three concession tops (hot dogs, ice cream and soft drinks) on the midway. Besides the seven cages there were 19 wagons. All the wagons, except the cages which were a variety of colors, were painted orange. The parade was excellent.

August found the circus moving from Washington, Pennsylvania, into Ohio



where it stayed through Tiffin and Bowling Green. Cookie O'Neil side show manager left in Troy, Ohio, on August 9, and was replaced by Charles E. Curran. Then a quick three days in Indiana and two in Illinois, the last being Cairo on the 14th, was followed by the move south. There were four towns in Tennessee including Paris. The month of August was finished by eight towns in Arkansas including Marianna where the three Camerons Scotch Band joined the side show. The next day at Forrest City, the parade was on time (we wonder if this was unusual), the side show and pit show both did big business and the big show had a turnaway in the afternoon. The next day at Wynne there was another afternoon turnaway although the evening was only fair. The last two towns in that week, Walnut Ridge and Marked Tree, both gave good business. The month ended in Blytheville.

The program was supervised by C.H. Sweeney, equestrian director, and the music was provided by J.F. Dusch and his band of 17. The show opened with a "Grand Introductory Pageant followed by the Garland Entry." Then came the program proper.

- 2—Marvelously trained elephants, two giants in ring 1 presented by Joe Metcalf and two young ones in ring 2 presented by Albert McGee.
- 3—Act beautiful introducing beautiful creations of living statuary in Picturesque poses
- 4—Swinging ladders over rings 1 and 2 by Kelly LaTell and Mary LaTell
- 5—A multitude of acrobats in an astounding and breathtaking series of leaps and somersaults over the biggest brutes that breath.
- 6—The fools reunion. The world's most famous clowns in an international shindig, all of the shows

A group of bosses posed in front of the ticket wagon of the Howe's Great London Shows in 1920.



## MENU



**HOWE'S GREAT LONDON CIRCUS**  
*The Marvel of the Decade*  
 SEE HUNDREDS OF MARVELOUS PERFORMERS  
 HEELS OF ELEPHANTS  
 SEEDS OF JONKLE SEEDS  
 SO GLOBE-WIDE FOLLY AT 11 A.M.  
 2 PERFORMERS ONLY ON SHING 2-5 P.M.  
**Wonders Never Before Assembled**

**3 RINGS - 2 STAGES - BIG ARENA**

**JULY 4th 1920**

**EASTPORT, MAINE**

This menu was printed for the special July 4 dinner served to the show personal. The illustration is from a newspaper ad. The show actually played Princeton, Maine on the fourth, and Eastport on the fifth.

- clowns, W.J. Langer and Edward Limoge, principal and producing clowns, participating.
- 7—The greatest bareback number ever presented in any circus ever in rings 1 and 2—Miss W.F. Wallett and C.H. Sweeney
- 8—A variety of clever acts—Voices in a clever bar act in ring 1; unrivaled roller skating on the stage by the Stofer and DeOnzo trio; The Three Bennett Athletes, remarkable young ladies who demonstrate boxing, fencing and wrestling

skill—many intricate feats of contortion by Frank DeRue. Feats of strength and balancing performed on a chair on an aerial trapeze by Lightning Mochon; remarkable feats of contortion by Ed Mankin

- 9—Varied exhibitions of strength and
- 10—The last word in animal training presented by the most remarkable actors of the dumb kingdom—wonderful trained dogs with an educated pony presented by Agnes Kelly in ring 1; remarkable trained dogs with above average intelligence presented by the Robbins Family on the stage; Animal intelligence never before approached, ponies trained by Mr. Patrick Kelly.
- 11—On the stage the LaDare Warner Trio, bicyclists supreme in unrivaled bicycle riding
- 12—Human frogs of contortion on the lofty trapeze—H. Mankin over ring 1 swaying and twirling on the trapeze and Frank DeRue in difficult feats of contortion over ring 2
- 13—Over Ring 1 Jeff Morrison in feats of equilibrism on the lofty perch. Over Ring 2 Lightning Mochon in intricate feats of delicate balancing on his head.
- 14—Tight wire acts by LeDare Warner in ring 1, by Kelly LaTell and troupe on the stage and by W.J. Langer in ring 2
- 15—Over the stage flying human butterflies in an iron jaw aerial exhibition by the LaTell Sisters
- 16—In ring 1 Mr. and Mrs. Wallett in exceedingly clever and finished bareback equestrianism. In ring 2 Mr. Cussins and Miss Sweeney introducing sensational and unique feats of bareback horsemanship
- 17—The greatest exponents of high school horsemanship in the two rings and on the track by Miss

The other side of the big show ticket wagon. The wagon was used to carry props and appeared in the parade.







Clark, Miss McGee, Albert McGee and Jack Cussins

- 18—Dashing daring bareback riding and somersaulting on running horses by Jack Cussins in ring 1 and Harry LaDeux in ring 2
- 19—Mule Hurdle riding by Jack Cussins and Albert McGee
- 20—On the stage extraordinary feats of acrobatic balancing and contortion and unparalleled feats of strength and agility by the six Robbins
- 21—Ben Hassan troupe of five Arabian acrobats and hand balancers on the stage
- 22—World's champion hoop roller and juggler and controller over common barrel hoops by Cy Herndon
- 23—A clever combination of comedy acrobatics. Ring 1 the Ben Hassan troupe; stage Charles Dryden balancing and juggling with a barrel; ring 2 Arab trio

The main show was followed by about thirty minutes of wild west riding and roping with five cowboys and four cowgirls participating. This was supplemented by two wrestlers giving an exhibition and taking on any and all comers from the audience who would get five dollars if they could last five minutes without being thrown.

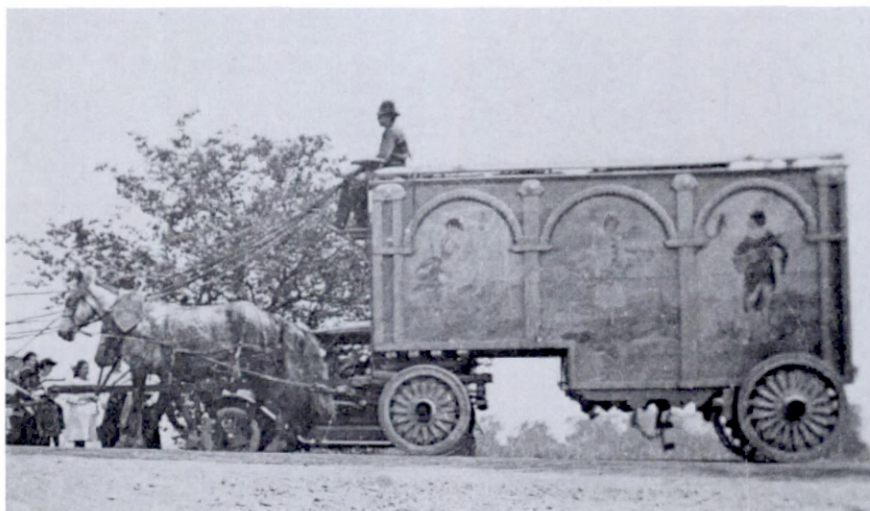
September opened in Missouri where it stayed the first nine days, the first stand being Caruthersville. The 4th was spent in Cape Girardeau. The next

A cage with four horse hitch in a Howe's Great London 1920 parade.

stand on Monday was Charleston. Then Sunday was spent in painting the show. Everybody available took a brush and paint can and went to it on the wagons and other accessible equipment. The next morning while parading one of the show's camels dropped dead. All that week business was good. On September 10 the show entered Arkansas at Paragould. It remained in that state for five days after which it moved into Texas for the rest of the month playing very small towns.

It is interesting that a name became well known in the American Circus Corporation activities appears this year for the first time in a management capacity. Dan Odom was on the roster as President and Manager of the show. Louis Thilman, secretary and treasurer, who as told earlier was killed, was succeeded by James Albanese. Charles Mugivan, we don't know if he was related to Jerry Mugivan but presume he was, was in charge of the front door. It is

**The No. 1 band wagon on the Howe's show in 1920 was this original Dode Fisk wagon. Mugivan and Bowers had purchased the Fisk show in 1911 and used the equipment for the Great Sanger show that year. The band appears not to have made the parade the day the photo was taken.**



interesting that for a relatively small show of 15 cars that it was, they had a need for two 24 hour men.

The various department bosses were headed by a new position of lot superintendent, Tom Tucker. Harry Sells with 26 men, including an assistant, head seat man, stake and chain man and sail maker, was still with the show having been boss canvasman since 1910. C.H. Johnson with 11 men had the side show. Props were handled by Carl Johnson and 15 men. Joe Metcalf, besides being elephant trainer, was in charge of the menagerie with 9 helpers. The trainmaster was August Crist with a crew of 13 men. Another department head, in many ways one of the most important, was Fred Davis, steward in charge of the cookhouse. To prepare the meals he had four cooks, a utility man and 20 waiters. The waiters incidentally, besides waiting on tables also put up and took down the dining top and tables and did all the dishwashing.

Tom Cayer was the boss of the draft stock with 27 drivers and helpers. Besides Cayer, his assistant and blacksmith, there were four 8 horse, five 6 horse, five 4 horse and three 2 horse drivers together with eight helpers. This suggests that there were 88 head of draft horses. This seems like a lot for a show with only four 60 foot stock cars which also had to carry four elephants, four bareback horses, four high school horses and about seven or eight wild west mounts, plus two mules and maybe as many as six ponies. The 60 foot stock cars could normally carry about 26 head of horses, so as can be seen the show's four cars must have been crowded indeed.

October was the last complete month for the show with the first two weeks being spent in Texas. The show continued to play mostly small towns, a few larger ones being Corpus Christi, Nacodoches, Lufkin, and Orange. They then moved into Louisiana at Jennings. Here they stopped in New Iberia, Houma, Lafayette, Crowley and closed out the state at Bastrop. They then started the home run going into Arkansas at Crossett. After a 163 mile run from Demott they opened November in Hot Springs. Three more stops in that state were followed by Poplar Bluff, Sikeston, and Jackson, all Missouri.

As part of the side show, perhaps the most active, was Prof. Proctor's Colored Minstrels. This group put on an almost complete show in itself. Including Montell Proctor the "Prof" and his two brothers, there were eleven musicians in the band. In addition there were two comedian-dancers, both men, and two girl vocalists. The band itself also rode on one of the bandwagons and played in the parade.

Also not previously mentioned was the ZaZa show on the midway. Just what this was we do not know, nor do





Two wagons are ready for the parade in Eastport, Maine, July 5, 1920.

we have any clues, but it was probably some kind of geek or snake show. It was managed by Ray Drum and Princess ZaZa was his wife. It was enough of a show to require an inside lecturer and of course, a ticket taker at the door. Ray Crum undoubtedly sold tickets out front and gave the come-on talks. Also on the midway there were three special privileges managed by Paul Wenger, using six men, two each on balloons, pictures (quick ones, the forerunners of polaroid pictures), and a lunch stand. Besides these there were sixteen men who sold peanuts, popcorn, soft drinks, etc., in the menagerie and on the seats in the big top.

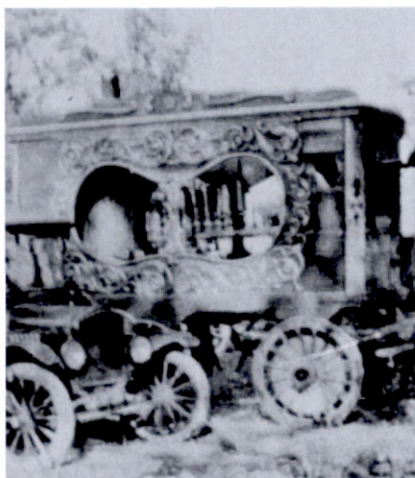
Jackson, Missouri, mentioned above was the closing stand on November 8 after which they packed up and moved into winter quarters at Douglas Park in Louisville, Kentucky. But before that Capt. Paul DeSarisian, lion tamer of the fighting lion act in the side show, was attacked by his lion in Poplar Bluff. He was not seriously hurt, was treated there, and then left for his home in



This light cage carried a bear in the 1920 Howe's parade, pulled by two horses.

the side show, and the cage was moved into the menagerie top to augment that display. Also in Jackson the show gave another sumptuous dinner in the cook-house as a closing gesture although with only one entree, roast turkey, it was not as grand as the 4th of July dinner.

Finally it was reported that the season had been highly pleasant and profitable. It had traveled 11,989 miles and visited 15 states and 4 Canadian provinces. During the season for various reasons, rain, bad lots, late arrivals and poor business in small towns, three days were lost and ten half days. One Sunday show was played at Houma, Louisiana, October 17. It was announced that for the 1921 season the show would go out somewhat enlarged to 20 cars. Actually, however, 1921 saw the show enlarged to 25 cars, a much larger show. A full account of that season was reported by Joe Bradbury in the August-September 1964 *Bandwagon* and will not be covered here.



This steam calliope long used on the Howe's show was last on that circus in 1920. In 1921 it was on Palmer Bros. and in 1923 and 1924 on Golden. Bros.

Worcester, Massachusetts to recuperate. So for the last two days the show was without its untameable lion act in



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# SIDE SHOWS AND BANNERLINES

The exhibition human oddities to the public originated during the seventeenth century at English fairs, although there is some suggestion that freaks of nature may have been shown in that country previously. The book *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair* tells of "two girls joined together by the crowns of their heads" being shown at the Bartholomew Fair in 1662. A giant was exhibited at the Southwick Fair in 1684, and a midget girl was shown at Bartholomew in 1667.

It was natural that such attractions were popular in America after the English settled here, and many oddities appeared in early 19th century museums. Charles Willson Peale opened a museum in Philadelphia in 1784 and for years he remained one of America's great museum operators. On November 12, 1786 an advertisement appeared in a Philadelphia newspaper telling of Mr. Peale exhibiting a "repository of natural curiosities." Peale's and other early museums offered natural history displays and large varieties of stuffed birds and animals. In 1831 Peale exhibited the skeleton of a mammoth. Mons. Behin, one of the early human attractions to appear in a museum, "the Belgian Giant," was featured at the Philadelphia Museum in 1840.

In 1790s John Scudder opened a museum in New York City and continued as a leading museum operator for many years. In 1842 P. T. Barnum purchased Scudder's American Museum, and a few years later bought the Peale unit in Philadelphia. Madam Fortune Clofulla, a bearded lady from England appeared at the Philadelphia Museum and then with Barnum in New York in 1853. Barnum exhibited Mr. and Mrs. Randall, a giant couple, in 1845, and introduced Mille and Chris-

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

tine as the "two headed" girl in 1854. The two sisters were Siamese twins who were dressed to appear as two heads on one body. Around 1850 Barnum found a deformed boy by the name of William Henry Johnson in a small New England town. Barnum shaved Johnson's pin shaped head and called him Zip, the "what is it." The museum also featured American Indians, South Sea Islanders, Africans and Orientals. Other attractions included magic, Punch and Judy, ventriloquists, sword walking, knife throwing and strong men.

The museum operators soon found that certain types of freaks had superior drawing power and began using giants, dwarfs, midgets, fat people, those without arms or legs, people with peculiar

**The Bunnell Bros. side show on the Barnum show in 1873 used four short banners and three high ones. The tent was quite small. Circus World Museum collection.**



**The Cole Bros. side show banner line is pictured on the opening day of the 1937 season.**

hair and skin conditions, and those with abnormal development in body parts such as heads, hands and feet.

Museum attractions became a part of traveling shows in the 1830s. The earliest "outside show" that has been verified was on the National Menagerie of June, Titus & Co. in 1833. It carried wax figure exhibits which were set up in hotels. By 1834 the first actual side shows appeared on circus lots. J. R. & W. Howe & Co. New York Menagerie exhibited Mr. Nellis, an armless man, in a second pavilion. Other shows with attractions in a separate tent that year were June, Titus, Angevine & Co.; Purdy, Welch & Co.; Purdy, Welch, Macomber & Co.; and Waring, Tufts & Co. All of these shows exhibited museums with wax figures. In 1835 the June, Titus & Co. unit of the Zoological Institute added a group singing Negro songs to their wax figures. In 1836 Aaron Turner had human performers in a separate tent, but they performed af-



ter the circus was completed in what may have been the first concert or "after show." The first circus to advertise as a menagerie, circus, and museum was Waring, Raymond & Co. in 1837. The Boston Amphitheatre side show that same year had a separate pavilion which was entered from the menagerie tent at no extra charge, the typical arrangement of the day.

Circus side shows as we know them today first appeared in the 1850s. For example, Col. Wood's Museum appeared with the Spalding and Rogers show in 1858. His attractions included a bearded lady, a giantess, and an Italian bird warbler. Wood had operated museums in Philadelphia and other cities and is a good example of a showman making the transition from building to under canvas on a circus.

The first reference to outside illustrations appears in the April 18, 1863 *New York Clipper* which stated that Joseph Cushing's side show on the L. B. Lent Equestricirculum had a fifty foot round top canvas with every available spot on it covered with full length paintings of the different performers engaged.

In the 1850s the Asiatic Caravan, Museum and Menagerie of P. T. Barnum featured General Tom Thumb; R. G. Nellins, the armless wonder; a group of wax figures; and some Egyptian mummies.

William Cameron Coup joined out with the Barnum Caravan show in Washington, Indiana in 1852, and quickly learned about the exhibition of human oddities and museum attractions. In 1861 he had the side show privileges on the E. F. and J. Mabie Circus, and by 1866 had the side show on the Yankee Robinson Circus. He remained with that show for three years and then joined with Dan Costello in 1869.

Coup and Costello arranged for the use of the Barnum name for a circus in 1871. This show featured a museum with twenty vans containing wax works, dioramas, mechanical figures as well as Admiral Dot, a midget; Col. Goschen, a giant; Anna Leake, an armless girl; and Baby Eusau, a bearded girl.

The museum of the P.T. Barnum's Great Traveling Exposition in 1871 appeared in a separate tent on the midway of the circus. A group of canvas paintings were placed in front of the tent depicting the attractions appearing in the side show. While no illustrations are available of the 1871 side show, an 1873 photo shows six pictorial banners of which two were of a larger size than the other four, an unusual arrangement, although the French and Co. Circus had a bannerline with four two high and six single high canvas paintings in 1890. William A. Jukes, an expert in mechanical and musical machines, managed the Barnum side show. He had been with a number of city museums in prior years. The living curiosi-



**The French & Co. side show in 1890 was unusual with four high banners and six short ones. All photos from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise noted.**

ties appearing in the show included Admiral Dot; Zulma Agra, a circassian lady; Charles Tripp, the no armed boy; Zip; and the Fiji cannibals.

New York City was headquarters for a number of show equipment suppliers in the late 1800s. The June 28, 1890 issue of the *New York Clipper* carried an ad for Lawrence W. Seavey, a scenic artist on 138th street, who claimed that his firm had been established in 1865. The next week's *Clipper* carried an ad for the J.W. Cridland Studio offering side show paintings that were "rich in color and had fine faces." Later in the year an ad appeared for the Tucker Brothers, who had paintings for sale, and in December a group of Tucker banners was offered for sale. The paintings were 10 by 12 and 8 by 17 feet and included subjects such as Monks, Circassian Lady, Demon Child, Double Children, Half Lady, Wild Man and entrance paintings. The final New York banner painter advertising in 1890 was Charles Wolf & Co., who offered side show paintings and museum displays. The Philadelphia firm of Humphreys also offered banners in bright colors at low prices and stated that "they had many on hand at cheap prices."

In February of 1891 Frank M. Chambers, of New York, offered 10' by 12' banners for \$15.8' by 10' for \$12 and 6' by 8' for \$10. By 1892 the Hafner Bros. of Philadelphia, advertised in the *Clipper* that they were the largest show painting studio in America. An 1894 ad

**Bob Hunting Circus side show in 1894 used four high banners and four short ones.**



stated that Millard and Hayden, had been with Tucker Bros. for five years, and that all of their banners for sale in October of 1894. An advertisement in 1896 for the Tucker Bros. stated that all banners were designed and drawn by Stanton Tucker.

Most of these banner studios used a group of painters and no single individual has been identified for his outstanding work. Nevertheless Clarence Fagg, of New York, began to build a name for himself in the late 1890s. He had worked for the A.W. Millard & Co. before striking out on his own. In one of his ads Fagg stated that he had painted the banners for the Barnum & Bailey European tour. By 1898 Stanton Tucker had joined with Charles Wolf, s an advertisement stated that Stanton Tucker's work was available only from Tucker & Wolf. In 1899 Clarence Fagg stated in an ad that William T. Lee, "for 24 years America's greatest show painter," remained in charge of all work done by his firm. That same year Charles Wolf offered banners for sale at \$10 for an 8' by 10', \$12.50 for a 10' by 10', \$15 for a 10' by 12' and \$25 for 10' by 20'. By 1899 Stanton Tucker had moved to the E.J. Hayden & Co. After 1900 Clarence Fagg and E.J. Hayden appear to have been the major suppliers of banners for circuses.

Music was first provided in side shows by organs and mechanical means. When bands first appeared in the annexes the musicians were white. Minstrel shows started around 1840, with white people appearing in black face. Black bands and minstrel programs later began appearing in side shows on a few large circuses, including Sells Bros., Great Wallace and John Robinson. Black performers were not used by the Ringling Bros., until 1905. In 1873 the "Alabama Slave Minstrels"





The strong man in the Charles Lee Great London show posed in front of his banner in 1896.

appeared with the Barnum show and from that time on many side show bands were black and carried extra blacks, male and female, dancing, singing, and presenting minstrel and variety acts.

Foreign troupes in native costumes also sang and danced. The Bayrooty Oriental Dancers were with the Barnum show for many years. The use of ethnic musicians lead to the use of Hawaiian Troupes. Hawaiian musicians and dancers appeared with the Ringling-Barnum Circus side show from the 1920s until it closed under canvas in 1956.

George B. Bunnell, a prominent New York museum operator had the side show on the Stone and Murray Circus in 1869. In 1875 he and his brother operated the "Palace of Wonders" side show on the Barnum show. The side show privilege was sold to them and was not show owned in this case. The 1875 Barnum route book stated, "This is not one of the things usually seen traveling with a show company, but is one vast tent as large as an ordinary circus, containing twelve cages, four elephants, five camels and a number of curiosities in a show lasting one hour." There is suggestion that as the side shows became larger and presented concerts, seats were placed in the tent. The Bunnell Brothers operated the Barnum side show in 1879 with William Henshaw as the manager. The performers included fourteen people doing songs, dances, juggling, clog dancing,

electric changes and a ventriloquist. The curiosities included the St. Benot Twins, a two headed baby; Ashbury Benjamin, leopard boy; and Zip.

The Adam Forepaugh 1878 side show was managed by John Forepaugh and featured a bearded lady, a white haired lady, a midget, a magician and Punch and Judy. It also presented performing monkeys and an educated hog. The side show of Cooper & Bailey in 1879 had a six piece band and thirteen attractions including Eli Bowman, a man with no legs; and Charles Tripp, no armed man. In addition, a concert was given featuring clog dancers, a banjo player, singers, acrobatic dancing, a pantomime actor and concluded with a lady fired from a cannon.

The W.C. Coup side show in 1879 contained an aquarium, a circassian queen, a magician, a snake charmer, a juggler and an eight footed horse. The side show of the Sells Bros. Circus in 1884 had fifteen attractions and a ten piece black band. The Van Amburgh & Reiche Bros. Circus side show in 1885 had ten attractions and an eight piece band. Wallace & Company in 1887 featured ten attractions in a fifty foot tent with a thirty foot middle. The Bob Hunt-

The bannerline of Charles Prescott's Great Eastern Show in 1897 used only six short banners plus the entrance.



ing Circus in 1888 presented a snake charmer, a tattooed boy, a strong man, glass blowers, a fire eater and a magician. Each visitor to the Hunting side show received a present.

The size and number of attractions in side shows began to increase around 1890. The bannerlines were longer, using a canvas likeness of each performer in front of the tent. The bigger features would often be accorded a double wide banner usually placed on either side of the entrance banner, or on each end of the bannerline. The larger shows used as many as fourteen banners in addition to the entrance, making a flash extending about 180 feet along the midway. The Walter L. Main Circus in 1891 had fourteen attractions and a nine piece black band. The John Robinson show had thirteen performers in its side show the same year. After the middle 1890s most large circuses used twelve to fifteen attractions plus a band in their side shows.

The side show tent used by Forepaugh-Sells in 1896 was a sixty foot round top with two twenty-eight foot middle pieces with fourteen stages on jacks, all with carpets and screens, as well as large bandstand for the ten black musicians and minstrel performers. W. H. McFarland made the outside openings and did a knife throwing act with his wife on the inside for which he received \$40.00 a week. Other attractions included G. A. Shields and his wife, giants, \$20.00; Wesley Baum and wife, tattooed people, \$20.00; Willie Ray and wife, midgets, \$30.00; and Nettie Leona, the snake charmer, \$15.00. An unidentified man received \$5.00 a week to have rocks broken on his head. Solomon White and a black band of ten pieces presented a minstrel show at \$80.00 a week for the entire group. Four ticket sellers doubled as "orators" making openings; their salaries ranged from \$12.00 to \$25.00 a week. The total cost of the side show, excluding canvasmen, was \$282.00 a week. The total of fourteen performers were illustrated on an equal number of banners. A small 15 by 15 foot marquee provided an entrance way to the annex. A large bally platform and three ticket boxes were in front of the entrance. No record of weekly grosses is available; however, on the Sells & Barrett Circus the one day gross in Winnipeg, Canada, on August 9, 1887 was \$514.25.

The managers usually made the opening, bringing performers out front to appear briefly on a bally platform about six feet high. The band was always brought out for each opening. The talker extolled the features as shown on the banners and after five or ten minutes he would "turn the tip" and direct the towners to the four or so ticket boxes. Each show had additional lectures and orators. The ticket seller continued to grind the crowd following the big opening. After entering the tent





**In 1899 the Ringling Bros. Circus used nineteen banners extending a total of 190 feet in this Rockford, Illinois photo.**

the patrons were introduced to each of the attractions that appeared on platforms five feet from the ground. A stage was placed in one end or in the center of the tent for the band, the dancers and singers. Most of the side show performers sold photos or booklets as a source of additional income. Half of the money received was taken by the show.

W.D. Hager a manager of the Barnum & Bailey side show for many years was one of the great orators in the business. He was followed by Lew Graham, who was a "solicitor" on the Barnum side show in 1895. Graham later became manager, and continued each season through Ringling-Barnum in 1935.

The side show tents on the larger railroad circuses at the turn of the century were quite large. The 1902 Great Wallace side show was presented in a 75 foot round top with one 40 and one 30 foot middle. The Wallace show was a red hot grift operation and this large tent provided plenty of space for the "lucky boys" to work their shell and card games on the towners. The annex tent on the Forepaugh-Sells show in 1904 was a 70 with two 40 foot middle pieces. This show was not a grifter, however.

At the turn of the century many of the banners used by the Ringling show were painted by either the Clarence Fagg Company or the E. J. Hayden Company, both of New York City. A 1907 Hayden invoice indicates that 20' by 24' banners cost \$75.00 each, that 12' by 20' were \$38.00 each, and that 10' by 12' were \$25.00 each. The eleven banners for which Ringling was billed totaled \$479.00. The Hayden firm also provided the banners for the Ringling-owned Adam Forepaugh & Sells

Bros. Circus in 1910. In a letter to the Hayden firm dated January 31, 1910, the Ringlings ordered the new banners for the season including four 10x16 foot banners and one "over-door" [entrance] lettered banner, and expected them to be A#1. They advised that they could have beat his price on the 10'x16's but since Hayden was doing most of their other work they would have the Forepaugh-Sells banners done by him. The banners were to be finished and delivered to Baraboo by April 1. A sketch was sent showing the design of the entrance banner. The entrance banner was to be 10 feet wide and 8 feet high and was to read, "Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Big United Double Side Shows, Museum and Carnival of Wonders Strictly Moral and Refined Exhibitions and Startling Living Curiosities. One ticket Admits to All. Entrance Here." Photos were sent to Hayden of Countess Annie Vaccaro, the female midget, and of the two Pagliaros. A 10'x16' banner was to be painted of the two subjects, using the little lady on the top half and the Pagliaros musical act on the lower half. The letter stated that the lettering and design would be left to Hayden's judgement, and that they were to be as showy and attractive as possible. They also ordered a 10'x16' banner of Amaza, Mexican sword swallowing lady. Additional banners were ordered for the

**Fifteen banners on the Forepaugh-Sells side show in 1898 extended a 150 feet along the midway.**

"Rooster Band" and the "Alvers Original Alabama Minstrels."

On February 28, 1910, additional banners were ordered for the Forepaugh-Sells show. One of these was for General Pisano. It was to show him breaking chains around his chest by expansion, and biting and breaking 8 inch spikes in two with his teeth. They asked that Pisano be shown in a costume of knickerbocker satin pants which came just below the knee, stockings or tights, low satin shoes, and tight shirt. A photo of Pisano was sent and Hayden was further instructed to letter the banner "General Pisano, The Original Jan Jacobs, Master of All Iron Jaw and Chest Expansion Artists," but added "that if you can improve the banner by changing this lettering you may do so."

On March 3 they wrote to Hayden again ordering a banner for Madam Roberts, the long haired lady. Two photos were sent and the lettering was listed. The letter continued saying that this made nine paintings that had been ordered and they wanted to make sure this corresponded with Hayden's list. The Ringlings wrote again on March 9, 10 and 14 ordering one more banner each time. Naturally all were to be made in time for the opening. The invoice from Hayden is not available so we don't know his price; however, a bill from Clarence Fagg in 1906 shows he charged \$82.00 for a 20 by 24 foot banner used by the Ringling show.

The delay in ordering these banners for the 1910 Forepaugh-Sells show was due to the late signing of the acts. We have the contracts in our files for most of the attractions in the side show that season. E.J. Kelly was signed on







The side show performers of the Campbell Bros. Circus in 1900 posed on the bally platform in this photo.

January 18, 1910 as manager. For \$50.00 a week he managed the side show, made its openings, and made announcements in the big show. He also furnished "rooster band," and Mrs. Kelly did a sword swallowing act.

Lowery and Morgan were signed to provide a black band of 11 to 13 people for parade and side show, and a minstrel show. All this for \$135.00 a week. Michele Pagliaro received \$40.00 a week plus half the receipts of the sale of his photos. He did a musical act playing four instruments at one time with his wife singing in Italian. Pagliaro also managed Annie Vaccaro, a midget, and furnished photos of her to be sold at ten cents each with half going to the show. They were all to go in the parade if required.

General Pisano was not signed until February 21. For \$15 a week he did strong expansion acts in side show, and provided photos or booklets to be sold with half going to show. Pisano also had to have one 10x16 foot banner painting. Harry G. Karsey was contacted at \$7.00 a week as a tattooed man in side show. He also was required to pay for one "first class" 10x16 foot banner painting. He had the tattooing privilege and sold photos, with half going to the show.

Mrs. William H. Roberts contracted to exhibit herself as a long haired lady for \$15.00 a week. She was to provide one new banner painting. Rosa Valerio

J.E. "Doc" Ogden managed the side show of Martin Down's Cole Bros. Circus in 1909. The quality of the banner paintings is outstanding.



Lew Graham, one of the great side show managers of all time, is shown selling tickets on the Ringling Bros. side show in 1908.

week, but only had to pay one half (\$20.00) on a 10 by 18 foot banner painting. The actual cost of a banner in 1910 is not known, but \$20.00 probably represented about two thirds of the cost. Tripp had been on the show the prior year at the same \$15.00 and had been required to pay \$21.00 toward a 12 by 20 foot banner from Hayden. Paying for all or part of a banner apparently was a working condition that side show performers understood.

By the 1914 season wages for Ringling side show performers had gone up a bit. The people contracted for the show were: Fred Walters, blue man, \$35.00; Eliza Trucks, albino woman, \$14.00; Joe Leffler, albino man, \$15.00; A. MacWilkie, long bearded bag piper, \$20.00; Princess Tiny, midget, \$75.00; Meyers & Meyers, color minstrels, \$25.00; Lentini, three legged man, \$45.00; Bonita, fat midget, \$45.00; Val Vino, lecturer, \$25.00; R. Roy Pope, colored band of 12 pieces, \$120.00; Frank Blasser, broom factory, \$30.00; Charles B. Tripp, \$20.00; Sascha, wire haired marvel, \$30.00; Miss Gabriel, half lady, \$100.00; Krao Farini, bearded lady, \$50.00; J. Clark, tattooed man, \$20.00; and John Marley, ticket seller and second openings, \$20.00. This was a total of \$689.00 a week. Other expenses of the side show operation included manager Lew Graham's salary, additional ticket sellers, the canvasmen, the cost of the tent, the wagons and the space on the sleepers.

The small Texas Bill's Wild West used a small bannerline during its tour in 1904.





A number of circuses operated more than one side show on their midway. The Barnum show had the Siamese twins, Millie and Christine, in a second show on the midway for years as a single attraction. In 1897 the Ringling Bros. Circus presented a motion picture of the Corbett and Fitzsimons prize fight as an attraction on their midway in addition to the regular side show. In 1898 a new film was shown of the war in Cuba. Some years later in 1912 the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West had a large #1 side show with thirteen attractions and a black band, a #2 show was called a "Six In One" on its banners. Other smaller circuses used around ten attractions in their side shows and midway shows began being called "ten in ones." Many of these small ten and fifteen car circuses not only had grift in their side show tents, but offered dancing and suggestive female performances in a walled off section at the end of the tent. The selling of the "extra" show, known as the "blowoff," at an additional charge was offered after the final regular attraction had completed his performance. Both the gambling and the lewd performance sometimes were brought to the attention of local law officers. A grift show usually carried a "fixer" who had made prior arrangements with the local police by way of a payoff.

The Genry Bros. Circus in 1922 had a 45 foot side show tent with two thirty foot middles and six banners. The Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in 1926 carried a seventy foot side show tent, purchased from the Neumann Tent & Awning Co. of Chicago, with two forty foot middles which cost \$1912.65. The Hagenbeck show also received fourteen 12 by 20 foot banners at \$51.50 each and a 24 by 20 foot entrance banner that cost \$103.00 from the Neumann firm.

On January 3, 1927 Neumann wrote Zack Terrell, manager of the Sells-Floto Circus, that they would hold the price the same as last year on banners. The

The No. 2 side show of the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West was in addition to the larger No. 1 regular midway attractions.



This photo card was sold by Alistair MacWilkie while on the Forepaugh-Sells show in 1910.

12 by 20 foot double deck banners as well as a 24 by 10 foot doorway banner were quoted at \$50.00 each. The letter added, "To rope the banners across the center of the back with tarred rope, the same as we have done previously—\$1.50, total each banner \$51.50." A drawing at the bottom of the letter showed how the tarred rope would be placed in the center of the back of each banner.

A copy of the official financial statement of the Sell-Floto Circus covering the 1928 season in our files provides some interesting information on the side show that year. The total expense of the side show for the season was \$30,582.42, broken down as follows: Performers salaries \$19,045.35, band \$5,072.65, manager's salary \$2900.00, workingmen's wages \$2986.00 and miscellaneous expenses \$578.42. The daily average was \$157.64. The total income of the side show for the season was \$98,636.25, making a profit of

\$68,053.83, or a daily average of \$350.80.

Although a bit afiel from the subject of this article other information in the 1928 Sells Floto statement is quite interesting. For example, the aftershow concert had receipts of \$24,025.25, and expenses of \$10,106.93, leaving a profit of \$13,918.32. The candy stands (concessions) had receipts of \$77,576.30 and expenses of \$50,140.24 providing \$27,436.06 profit. The dining car No. 1 had receipts of \$13,367.86 and expenses of \$8,619.31 for a gain of \$4,748.55. Dining car No. 2 had receipts of \$11,917.05 and expenses of \$5,638.28 for a profit of \$6,278.77. The commissary wagon had sales of \$21,722.69 and expenses of \$13,910.20 leaving a gain of \$7,812.49. The sale of big show local advertising banners came to \$9,732.00 and expenses of \$5,180.97 leaving \$4,551.03. There was even a profit of \$521.57 on the sale of route cards. One item listed as only "games" had income of \$10,033.75 and expenses of \$1,721.00 making a profit for the year of \$8,312.75. The games were no doubt the gambling that was provided in the pie cars, which were officially called dining cars. The slot machines also available in the pie cars had a profit for the year of \$448.70.

Most interesting of all is the information provided on the big show. The general admission total was \$658,086.73 plus reserve ticket sales of \$167,699.00 for a total of \$825,785.75 in total receipts. The expenses totaled \$844,385.94 making a loss of \$18,600.21. A few of the expenses were advance \$209,801.38, rail transportation \$79,485.48, general expense \$251,777.01, cook house \$72,201.27, stables \$53,318.46, animals \$26,457.54 and winterquarters \$27,034.13.

The total receipts for the road season of 194 days from April 1 to November 5,

The Carl Hagenbeck and Great Wallace Circus side show was managed by J.E. Ogden. This photo was taken in Toledo, Ohio during the 1912 season. A double wide banner advertises the P.G. Lowery's Georgia Minstrels. Part of Lowery's group is on the bally platform making an opening.







The Barnum & Bailey show first used carved side show fronts mounted on wagons in 1915. Seven canvas banners were placed on each side of the carved entrance wagons. This is a 1916 photo.

1928, less war tax, was \$1,414,523.84. The total disbursements were \$1,235,840.91, making a total profit of \$178,683.93 for the year. It has often been said that if the nut can be made on the big show, the other profit centers like the concessions, concert and side show provided the money that went in the bank at the end of a season, and that certainly appears to have been true with Sells-Floto. In this case, the side show was a major money-maker.

In 1929 the Sells-Floto Circus used a seventy foot annex tent with three thirty foot middles. The show had a 14 by 14 foot marquee and had thirteen 12 by 20 foot banners as well as a 20 by 24 foot entrance banner. There were fourteen stages with performers and a 12 by 12 foot stage for the minstrel band. The Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey Circus used a 75 foot side show tent with two forties and one thirty during the 1930 season.

During the 1920s and 1930s the large canvas suppliers such as the Chicago firms of Driver Bros. and Neumann Tent & Awning, provided banners to the various shows as part of their tent and canvas needs. Driver answered a letter from the Hagenbeck show in 1927 concerning the sale of used banners by saying that they had moved a hundred old banners that had piled up in the quarters of another circus company for \$6.00 each, taking a dollar commission on each. In a February 22, 1930 *Billboard* ad Baker & Lockwood, a large Kansas City tent maker, stated they were "now making banners." The Coney Island, New York firm of Millard & Bulsterbaum stated in their 1930 advertisement that they were "carnival and side show banner painters." The Neiman Studio of Chicago specialized in banners as well as stage scenery. This supplier sold banners to the ex-Corporation shows in the early 1930s.

The same size side show tent was used by Ringling-Barnum Circus in 1939 as in 1930. Clyde Ingalls was side show manager and Austin King was the



This banner line is typical of those used by the Sells-Floto Circus in the late 1920s.



The minstrel band of the Hagenbeck-Wallace side show in 1928 is shown on their platform just inside the front door.

lecturer. There were five ticket sellers and two ticket takers. The attractions were: Forest Lewis, Pop Eye the Sailor;

The last appearance of the Ringling-Barnum Circus bannerline was in Pittsburgh, Pa. at the closing of the show under canvas in 1956.

Milo Vagge, bag puncher; Wilbur Harris, world's largest mouth; the Gibb sisters, Siamese Twins; Charles Roark, Punch and Judy; Patsy Smith, sword swallower; Art Hubell, human bellows; Betty Green, Koo Koo, the bird girl; Joe Allen, Twisto; Senorita Josephine, snake trainer; Joe and Stocki, mystery cabinet; Bunny Black, headless girl; Jack Earle; giant and Dot Carlson, fat girl. The midgets included Major Mite, Thasia Gardener, Jennie Reynolds and the Doll Family of three. The Hawaiian Troupe included three musicians and five female dancers. Arthur Wright had a fourteen piece black band. A minstrel show included five additional black performers, as comedians and dancers. Sixteen banners folded out of four wagons in front of the show.

The gross income of the side show operation was very good and was indeed a profit center for all circuses. On May 29, 1954 the side show of the Ringling Bros. & Barnum Bailey Combined shows attracted 21,976 customers in Philadelphia.

Route books and official circus correspondence from the Pfening Archives were utilized in researching this article. Special appreciation is extended to Fred Dahlinger Jr. and Stuart Thayer for their help.





# MIAMI COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OBTAINS HISTORIC BARN

By K.H. Hartisch

Due to the expansion of the agriculture operation at Valley Farms, the former grounds of the American Circus Corporation, a portion of idle ground was to be planted. Within this area stood a barn that was no longer used in the farming operation. It was decided to raze the barn and then burn its lumber as with the barn removed the ground could be farmed straight through to the road that fronts the property.

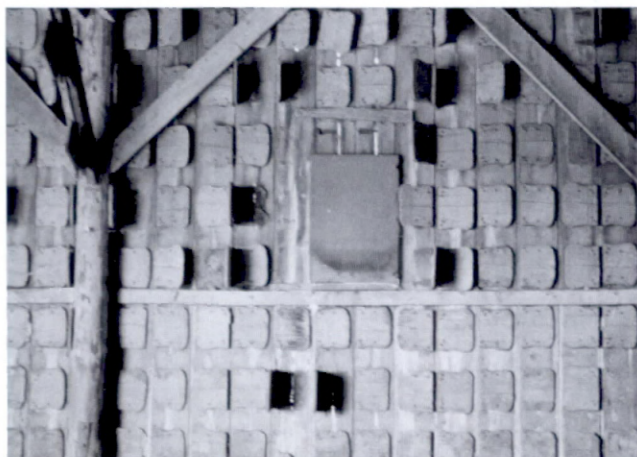
From an outward appearance the barn appeared to be built of regular building materials, but once inside the building it was discovered that its construction was unique as approximately 85% of the lumber had been in the circus business.

The wide board vertical siding was starback seat planks with all seat backs still hinged in place. A large quantity of the roof rafters were the starback seat stringers with the risers still in place. The stringers were the long boards that supported the elevated seatplanks. A smaller quantity of stringers had been used for reserve seat chairs while others were for the general admission seats more commonly known as the blues. Posts that supported the top plates of the side walls had been cut from center poles of circus tents.

It cannot be stated as actual fact, but it is believed this quantity of starback seats used in construction of this barn had been used on the Sells Floto Circus and became obsolete after all reserve seats of this show was converted to reserve seat chairs.

An extensive search failed to reveal the exact year the barn was built but it

Starback seatplanks were used for the vertical siding of the building. Former tent poles were used as vertical supports on the sides of the building. Hartisch photo.



This recent photo shows the Peru winter quarters horse barn prior to being disassembled. Hartisch photo.

is known to have been in existence in 1929. It is believed to have been built during the second building expansion program carried out by the American Circus Corporation in 1928. At this time it was necessary to build several additional buildings in order to accommodate the third show which was housed at the quarters after the close of the 1928 circus season.

The barn at one time contained stables for horses, in all probability baggage stock, the work horses of a circus of that era. From the winter of 1929-1930 to the winter of 1933-1934 as many as 500 to 750 head of these horses were housed at the quarters, with the number dwindling to around 300 by 1933. The decrease resulted as two of the three shows that had been housed at the quarters were taken off the road. The writer recalls in 1934 and 1935 some farm machinery was stored

in this building while the rest remained empty.

The fact this barn was to be destroyed came to the attention of Jerry Wise, a board member of the Miami County Historical Society. He then made the other board members aware of the historical significance of the building and they then inspected the structure. The board members approached the owners, and an agreement was reached concerning the removal of the building. The building was left standing until this fall when work parties, consisting of members of the society, spearheaded by Wise, dismantled the building piece by piece.

Through the willingness of the owners, the interest of the historical society, and the generosity of some society members to give of their time and labor a great amount of valuable circus material from Peru's circus past has been preserved.

The starback seat stringers were used to support the roof. Stringers from the blues and regular lumber was also used. Hartisch photo.





# THE NATHANS, A CIRCUS FAMILY

by Stuart Thayer

*Author's note: Much of the material on which this article is based came to us from a great-grandson of John J. Nathans. Mr. Fred P. Nathans of Weston, Connecticut, has generously shared what he has collected concerning his circus forebears.*

"In my 16 year of age left Philadelphia for New York with Dan Champlin and went prentice to him for three years . . ."

Thus did Thomas B. Nathans begin an autobiographical account of his circus career. It was the first sentence of a memoir written to his brother, John Jay Nathans, in 1889. It referred to events in 1823. Just two pages long, the letter, if it may be called that, chronicled twenty years of circus life.

We don't know why it was written, but can speculate that John J. Nathans and George F. Bailey, former partners and retired some nine years, constant companions in New York, had questioned some long-past affiliation and had written Thomas Nathans for clarification. Their timing was fortunate, for seventeen days after he penned his autobiography, Thomas Nathans died in Quincy, Florida, aged eighty-two.

Dan Champlin, the man to whom Thomas apprenticed himself, was an acrobat and wire-walker who first appeared in this country with James West's company in 1821. We assume he came to America with West and was, therefore, an Englishman. Nathans' statement that he travelled to New York with Champlin in 1823 can be verified by advertisements in Hoboken and Brooklyn in July and August of that year.

"We joined a comp(any) going south, I think the man's name was Mead," the narrative continues. The company referred to here was one of two that Price & Simpson sent out from New York in late 1823, this one bound for Savannah. We don't find Abraham Mead's name in print until 1826, but he could well have had a position with the Price & Simpson troupe.

"We had no top, our advertiser Pad(dy) Clark took his sadel (sic) bags on his shoulders with show bills in . . ."

Price & Simpson played in wooden arenas which they had built for them. Paddy Clark's system of carrying show bills was the method of the time.

"travel'd some time, then met Ben Brown's Circus. It had a 60 foot top the first I had seen."

Champlin was with J. Purdy Brown's circus in late 1826; we think this is the troupe to which Nathans refers. Ben Brown, J. Purdy's cousin, was riding master of the show and may well have been managing it for J. Purdy. More

important is the note concerning the size of the tent. It was the first one ever used by a circus and this is the first mention of its diameter.

"staid with him (Brown) some time, left him and joined a man by name Aaron T. Barker."

This is July, 1827. Barker, a contract drayman for Fogg, Quick and Mead's Washington Circus, started his own show that summer, employing people he hired away from the other circus. Dan Champlin was with the Washington Circus, so it stands to reason that Thomas Nathans was as well. Barker's circus did not last the season and closed owing salaries.<sup>1</sup>

"I went then with Jim Green [who] had been in the South and West all the time."



John Jay Nathans is shown near the end of his career in this circa 1880 photograph. Fred Nathans collection.

James B. Green, a menagerie and circus proprietor, was thought to have organized his first show in 1831 until Nathans' letter came to light. Green usually limited his routes to the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys.

"In 1828 took you John and you went with Lucas Eaton and I staid with Green several years."

Here Thomas introduces his younger brother, John J. Nathans, then twelve years old. There are several references in the literature to John being apprenticed to "General" Eaton who is a somewhat shadowy figure in the early circus. He might have lent his apprentice to

others or been an investor in their companies.

Master Nathans is listed with Ben Brown's circus in 1828 and with Asa Smith in 1829. If Thomas was with Green, as he surely says he was, then Master Nathans must be John. He made his debut as a rider on 4 December 1829 in Columbia, South Carolina. "His first attempt before the public," the ads said.

The introduction of John J. Nathans into our narrative marks the inclusion of one of the outstanding personalities in nineteenth-century circus history. Active from this time until his retirement in 1880, J.J. Nathans was one of the few performers who was able to become a truly outstanding manager. As with his contemporaries, Richard Sands, Charles J. Rogers and Seth B. Howes, he bridged the gap between competence in the ring and the ability to manage large organizations. While he was not the equal of the others as a rider, it was only a matter of degree, and he appears to have been every bit their equal as a manager. Like them, he was able to make and keep a great deal of money. All of these gentlemen retired with relative wealth.

To return to Thomas Nathans' letter, he next writes, "you [meaning John J.] came to me at Richmond and we, with the company, went south, quit Green at end of year."

It appears that he is describing events that occurred in 1831, as the J.B. Green & Co. Menagerie visited Charleston, South Carolina, on 21 December of that year. Green advertised no circus performance, but the following appears in J.J.'s obituary in the *New York Clipper* of 2 January 1892:

The show, as it was called in those days, was little else than a menagerie, but the canvas and sawdust had dazzled the adventurous boy when it was in his city . . . He at once sprang on a horse's back, and in an incredibly short time he had become a proficient rider and demanded that his performance be given a place in the program.

No doubt, there is a touch of apocrypha in this description, but it does answer our question as to the brothers' duties with Green. Thomas Nathans, incidentally, was never a rider. We find him as a comic singer until 1840, when he also did snake handling, monkey and pony acts and, as he put it, "going into the cage of animals."

"Joined Bill Harrington," is the next statement. William Harrington (1804-1847), a four-horse and scenic rider, had been performing at least since 1825. In 1831-32-33 he was the manager and star performer of his own cir-



cus. In Charleston in January, 1832, Master Nathans was on the roster as a rider. Unfortunately, we have no 1833 program for Harrington, so cannot place the brothers with him with certainty. Thomas does give us a clue when he writes "after [Harrington] engaged to firm of Raymond, Ogden & Co., Weeks [was the] manager."

Raymond, Ogden & Co. had been in existence since 1831, when it was apparently organized to exhibit the second live rhinoceros to reach this country. It was a partnership between James Raymond and Darius Ogden. The menagerie ended the year 1832 in Charleston playing in conjunction with Harrington's circus. It might have been then that the Nathans switched employment. We don't find them again until September, 1834, when they were together on Buckley, Weeks & Co. in Newton, New Jersey.

This circus was owned by Mathew Buckley and Edward C. Weeks. Weeks was a brother of Chauncey R. Weeks, whom Thomas referred to above as manager of Raymond & Ogden. John was a rider and Thomas a singer of comic songs for Buckley, Weeks & Co. in 1834 and 1835.

James Raymond and his partners purchased the Lion Tavern in Boston in the winter of 1834-35 and converted it into the Lion Theatre. Their program was a mixed one, combining drama and circus. For the arena portion of the concern they bought or leased Buckley, Weeks & Co. In 1835 the show went on tour, minus the dramatic elements, under the title Boston Lion Circus and the Nathans were with it.

Thomas Nathans remained with the Boston Lion for 1836, but John J. toured with the Boston Arena Company, J.J. Hall, manager. It is in this season that we find the first critical comment on John's ability. The *Kings-ton, Ontario Chronicle & Gazette* of 30 July 1836, printed:

Nathans was rather superior in his way. The feats performed by him on three horses were more imposing and difficult than any other part of the performance.

He led the grand entree, performed a duet on horseback with Mrs. Caldwell, presented the scenic act "Indian Chief," and was the two and three-horse Roman rider.

Hall took a troupe to the West Indies in February, 1838, and the brothers accompanied him. In addition, John Nathans had by then acquired two apprentices, brothers Edward and William Kincaid (sometimes Kincaide). These young boys (William was five or six) were two of the seven youths from the same neighborhood in Baltimore who became circus apprentices in 1834 and 1835. John Glenroy was one of that group.

John J. and his pupils spent the 1838 season on Buckley, Rockwell, Hopkins

& Co. During the tour Henry Rockwell dropped out and Thomas Tufts took his place, thus Buckley, Hopkins, Tufts & Co. became the firm name. They spent the winter of 1838-39 exhibiting in Baltimore and Washington and Philadelphia and in the latter city J.J. Hall and J.J. Nathans bought out Buckley's and Hopkins' interest and the title became Hall, Nathans, Tufts & Co., J.J. Nathans' first essay into management. Unfortunately, 1839 was a bad year for the American economy and the new partners were no more successful at selling tickets than had the old ones been. In July or August, 1839, Clayton, Bartlett & Welch bought the circus. John Nathans and the Kincaid boys remained as employees of the new owners for the rest of the year and for 1840 as well.



John Nathans with three apprentices whose identity remains a mystery. Most likely they are Philo Nathans, and Edward and William Kincaid. This circa 1855 photo is one of the earliest showing circus costumes. Fred Nathans collection.

We find no affiliation for Thomas Nathans in either 1838 or 1839, but since we have no list of performers for any of the shows John J. was with in those years, it is possible that Thomas stayed with him. In 1840, however, Thomas says, "At last got with June, Titus, Angevine & Co. on what was called the flatfoots." There were several units of this concern and Thomas was with one or another of them through the end of the 1842 season. At that time the firm was dissolved and Thomas Nathans retired after nineteen years in the business.

At some time in the 1840's, date uncertain, John J. married Mary Amilia Pastor, like himself a native of Philadelphia. She may or may not have been related to the Pastor brothers of New York, who were later apprentices of John's.

In 1841 he became associated with the original "Flatfoots," that group of New York showmen whose main inter-

ests were the various shows titled June, Titus, Angevine & Co. He was with them in 1841 and 1842. In the first of these years he was manager of their third unit, which became the Eastern Division (of two) in 1842. He also performed with these troupes and an 1842 ad said of him:

... a superb display of force, agility and a proof of how far the powers of human strength can be applied by perseverance and practice in training the body to deeds of elasticity and manly exercises...<sup>2</sup>

The reference here is to Nathans' ability to carry his apprentices on his shoulders and arms while standing on horseback. This was known as a carrying act.

When June, Titus, Angevine & Co. went out of business after the 1842 season Nathans caught on with Rufus Welch and was part of his organization for the next nine years. It was under Welch's tutelage that Nathans advanced to the front rank of showmen. As performer, manager and part-owner of several shows with Welch he apparently learned the business to such an extent that he was ever after in demand by his peers.

The circuses in which Nathans was involved over these years read as follows:

- 1843—Welch & Mann
- 1844—Welch, Mann & Delavan
- 1845—Welch, Mann & Delavan
- 1846—Welch, Mann & Delavan
- 1847—Welch & Delavan
- 1848—Welch, Delavan & Nathans
- 1849—Welch, Delavan & Nathans
- 1850—Welch, Delavan & Nathans
- 1851—Welch & Nathans

Nathans took Frank Pastor as an apprentice in 1845. Nathans has been described as "an old friend of the (Pastor) family," and, as we mentioned, there must have been some connection through his wife.<sup>3</sup> Frank Pastor (1837-1885) went on to become an accomplished pad rider (as was his mentor) and the best performer of the three Pastor brothers. He first appeared in the ring in early 1846 in what was termed "introductory horsemanship." This was an act in which he rode a horse on a long lead—a safety rein—held by Nathans.

More interesting was the act introduced in 1845 by Nathans and William Kincaid, then twelve years old (and advertised as nine) wherein Kincaid stood on Nathans' head while the horse galloped around the ring.

In 1847 Nathans took an apprentice Antonio (Tony) Pastor, who gained fame as a music-hall singer and even more fame as a New York restaurateur. Pastor (1832-1908) is quoted as saying, "Mr. Nathans got the consent of



my mother and I was apprenticed to him. In reality it was to learn to be an equestrian and acrobat, but as these things were not legally recognized, my apprentice papers read that I was to learn to be a farrier and veterinary man."<sup>4</sup> At some time prior to this Nathans had taken on William Pastor (b.1840) as a third pupil so he had all three of the brothers under his wing in 1848.

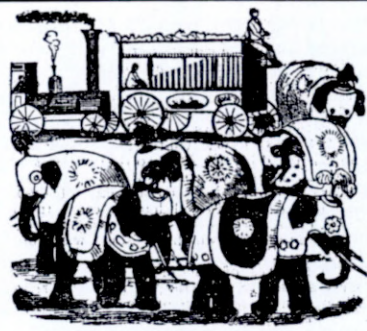
The above list indicates Nathans' name in the title of one show in 1848; Welch's National Circus was also on tour. If he was an investor in this concern, he owned part of one of the larger circuses. It had a new Stephenson bandwagon and a thirty-horse hitch as a parade feature. We say "if" he was an investor; Welch may have included his name in the title just to get his services.

William Delavan retired after the 1850 season and the title was shortened to Welch & Nathans. John Nathans was the featured rider, appearing at various times on one, two, four and six horses. This 1851 season saw the introduction of Miss Emma Nathans, "infantile equestrian, whose daring feats astonish all spectators," as well as Master Philo Nathans, "infant prodigy only four years of age, elegant in his most extraordinary exercises."

Emma C. Paulin (Emma Nathans) appears to be J.J.'s stepdaughter. Apparently, his wife had been married before; the records tell us nothing. Emma was eleven years-old in this year of her debut.

Philo Nathans was perhaps ten years-old in 1851, again there is some mystery as to who he was. Advertised often as J.J.'s son, Philo is not listed anywhere in the family records, not even in the family Bible where births of all the others in the family are recorded. He may have been a relative, or he may have been J.J.'s apprentice. It was not unusual for apprentices to adopt their master's name. When J.J. died, his obituary made no reference to Philo.<sup>5</sup>

J.J. and Philo were advertised as presenting "the most finished two-horse performance ever witnessed," when they appeared together on the eastern unit of Sands & Quick in 1852. Emma Nathans was with them as were the three Pastors in that year and 1853 as well. All of them transferred to the Mabie brothers circus for 1854. Then, in 1855, J.J. Nathans and Richard Sands formed a partnership that was to last for five years. Sands, Nathans & Co. was one of the more successful shows on the road from 1855 through 1859. Emma Nathans and the Pastor brothers went elsewhere in this period, but Philo remained and was still being advertised as J.J.'s son. It was during this partnership that Nathans ceased to perform, having reached his thirty-ninth birthday in 1855. he took the job of equestrian manager in the concern, the equivalent of today's program director.



**SANDS, NATHANS & CO'S**  
**GIGANTIC COMBINATION**  
**CIRCUS,**

Comprising the **Most Talented Performers**, the **Most Magnificent Stud of Horses**, and the **Most Wonderful Performing Elephants** in the World—forming the most **Splendid Combination of Attractions** ever offered by any travelling Company in America.

Prominent among the unprecedented attractions of this unique Exhibition, are the truly wonderful **Trained Elephants**

**Pizarro and Cortez**, lately purchased from the celebrated *Jardin des Plantes*, Paris, by **RICHARD SANDS, Esq.**, and imported expressly for this Exhibition, by Sands, Nathans & Co. Besides these remarkable animals, two other

**Colossal Elephants** are attached to the Exhibition, and a **Stud of Twelve Shetland Trick Ponies**.

Among the celebrated Equestrian Performers, Gymnasts, and Athletes, will be found

Eaton Stone, Charley Sherwood, Mme. Virginia, Denzor Brothers, J. J. Nathans, Philo Nathans, Master Charley, Mlle. Ida, Joseph Haslett and W. Ashton, Jesse Sands, Tony Pastor, Clown, George Sands, Ben. Huntington, Sam. Lathrop, the Gentleman Clown, and a numerous Troupe of Vaulters, Tumblers, Acrobats, Gymnasts, Equilibrists, Jugglers, Comic Singers, &c. &c.

In addition to these multifarious attractions, the Exhibition will be accompanied by the renowned

**Steam Callopie**, the most wonderful and magnificent musical instrument ever constructed. This gorgeous melodic monster will precede the Cavalcade on its entrance into the city, drawn by

**A Team of Elephants**, and perform a series of the most popular operatic airs, and will also play during every exhibition, when all will have an opportunity of examining its wonderful mechanism.

**OTTO HORNE'S NEW YORK CORNET BAND**, composed of picked solo performers, will perform all the newest and most fashionable selections of music during the Exhibition, when the Callopie is not used.

Will perform in **SALINA**, on **TUESDAY, May 21.**  
**Admission 25 Cents.**  
Doors open at 2 and 7 o'clock, P. M. Performances commence half an hour afterwards.  
At Lynn on Monday, May 22, 1859.  
May 19 21 1859

The *Clipper* once described the task as "conducting the arrangements and order of the scenes, acts, professional pageants and general cavalcade."

At the end of the 1859 tour the partners sold the firm to Quick, Smith and Chiarini, who in turn sold out to Charles Forshay. Forshay continued using the Sands title until Sands' untimely death in 1861. Nathans seems to have sat out the 1860 season. Emma Nathans had retired, temporarily, as she gave birth to a son, William Henry Pastor, on August 13, 1859. It has been suggested that William Pastor, J.J.'s apprentice, was her husband, though he was only nineteen years old in contrast to her age of twenty. No certain evidence is at hand; her husband's name was William H. Pastor, however.

In 1861 J.J. and Philo went west to join with the Mabie's in a show called

E.F. & J. Mabie and J.J. Nathans' American Circus Combined. It lasted the one season.

Apparently concerned with the effect of the Civil War on the entertainment business, Nathans outfitted the Metropolitan Circus in 1862 and with it toured the Mediterranean ports. The *Clipper* referred to this as a prodigious enterprise for those days. He returned in time to join what has since been called the "second generation of Flat-foots" in their first big enterprise.

This group, Nathans, George F. Bailey, Lewis June, Avery Smith and G.C. Quick, were to dominate the circus business in the eastern part of the country for the next decade (ceding the West to Spalding & Rogers and not yet being affected by the meteoric rise of Adam Forepaugh). A greater pool of managerial talent had not existed since the collapse of the Zoological Institute and another was not seen until the rise of the Ringling Brothers. Like these last, the partners in the new "Flatfoot" group each had his specialty within the various organizations they toured. George F. Bailey (1818-1903) was the "nuts and bolts" man who saw to the day-to-day operations; Nathans supervised the performance; Lewis June (1824-1888) was in charge of advertising; Gerard Quick (1811-1869) was the menagerie expert; and Avery Smith (1814-1876) counted the money.

Their first venture was as George F. Bailey & Co.'s Grand Circus, sometimes advertised as the Metropolitan and Quadruple Combination. This was supposedly Bailey's circus, which he had operated since 1856, when he took over the Aaron Turner show; Quick's hippopotamus, the first live one to be exhibited in America; and the Sands, Nathans & Co. elephants. Occasionally, the menagerie was advertised as being that of Herr Driesbach. The *Clipper*, referring to Nathans' presence on the show, called him "an old and experienced showman," in his forty-seventh year.

The Sands, Nathans & Co. elephants were named Albert, Victoria, Anthony and Cleopatra; Victoria was not the original of that name. In 1856 Sands and Nathans had imported Albert and Victoria from England where they had been the property of William Cooke and the animal stars of Batty's Circus. Albert had been trained to climb a fifteen-foot ramp, at the top of which he did a headstand. The two bulls were exhibited on various circuses for several years and in 1859 or 1860 were leased to John Wilson, the California showman. Victoria died in June, 1860, during this lease.

Anthony and Cleopatra were imported by the partners in 1857, no doubt because Albert and Victoria had been so popular. Anthony died in Belfast, Maine on July 24, 1866.

The Bailey circus was operated by the



**GRAND METROPOLITAN COMBINATION**

**QUADRUPLES**

**GEO. F. BAILEY & CO'S**

**CIRCUS!**

**MENAGERIE!**

**HIPPOPOTAMUS**

**SANDS NATHANS & CO'S**

**PERFORMING ELEPHANTS,**

**LARGEST ARRAY OF PERFORMERS**

**LIST OF ANIMALS.**

**PERFORMING ANIMALS!**

This George F. Bailey & Co. herald from the 1860s lists the Sands, Nathans & Co. elephants Anthony, Cleopatra, Victoria and Albert, as a feature attraction. Pfening Archives.

"new Flatfoots" from 1863 through 1871 (G.C. Quick had died in 1869). In addition, Smith, Quick and Nathans were partners with Seth B. Howes in the Great European Circus beginning in 1864. This was a combination of what had been Charles Forshay's Sands & Co. circus (see above) and the collection of outstanding parade wagons Howes had brought from England in late 1863. Avery Smith managed the European and Lewis June, who apparently was not an investor, handled the advertising. Howes sold out to his partners in May, 1866 and they operated the concern through the season of 1871. George Bailey bought out the other "Flatfoots" at the same time, so Smith and Nathans were temporarily out of the circus business.

During these years, which we have

admittedly gone over rather brusquely, there were other significant events in the Nathans family chronicle. Isaac Nathans, father of Thomas and John J., died in 1861. John J.'s wife, Mary, died in 1869. Philo Nathans, who we last mentioned as being with the 1861 Mabie circus, continued his career as a rider, appearing most often in the 1860's with the George F. Bailey show. In February, 1866, Philo married Victoria North (1846-1908?), daughter of the great Levi J. North. She was a professional, first in the circus and later on the variety stage. They had one child, Harry Whitney Nathans, born 19 May 1868. He apparently went into the entertainment business, possibly as a vaudevillian. Philo and Victoria were divorced in the early 1880's.

Yet another Nathans entered the circus business in 1868; this was Addison Mandelle Nathans, half-brother of John J., the child of Isaac Nathans' third marriage (he sired eighteen children all told). Addison, or Ad, as he preferred it, was in the Confederate Army in the Civil War, having been raised in Florida. He followed mercantile pursuits for some years before going to work for brother John J. on the Great European Circus. In 1869 he was with George F. Bailey and returned to the European for 1870 and 1871.

John J. Nathans married again in 1874. We mention this outside the order of our chronology because of his wife's career. Her name was Lucy Jane Watson and she was of an English circus family. When Seth B. Howes brought his Great European Circus from England in 1864, Lucy Watson accompanied it and performed as an equestrienne from that year until her marriage to J.J. Nathans at age twenty-nine.

There is a family tradition that J.J. first met Lucy Watson when she was a child and, sitting her upon his knee asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. According to the tale, she replied, "I'm going to marry you." This is one of the few personal notes we have of J.J. Nathans. Another is that he was, according to some who knew him, an immaculate dresser.

After selling out to George F. Bailey and closing the European, Nathans, Smith and June framed the North American Exhibition, put it under the management of Walter Waterman and sent it on a tour of South America. Ad Nathans went along as treasurer. In the family archives are some entertaining letters written by Ad complaining of Waterman's management, but they have no place in this narrative.

George F. Bailey closed his circus at the conclusion of the 1874 season, ending the eighteen-year history of the concern. Lewis June and J.J. Nathans took over the property and put June, Nathans & Co. on the road in 1875. The new Mrs. Nathans, billed as Lucille Watson,

**PROGRAMME**

WITH THE

**ORDER OF PERFORMANCES,**

AS GIVEN IN

**Sands, Nathans & Co's**

**GREAT AMERICAN CIRCUS.**

1. Cavalcade.—Omar Pacha's Grand Entrée in Raptoria.
2. New Comic Song..... Ben Lathrop
3. Juvenile Horsemanship..... Master Jesse Sands
4. The Pony Tamer..... performed by Mr. Bassett
5. Splendid Two-Horse Act, with Groupings.  
Feats, &c..... Nathans & Philo
6. Curious Feats of Equilibrium..... Mr. Demott
7. Sagacious Tricks and Exercises..... by the Pony Gemelle
8. Principal Act of Horsemanship..... Mr. Demott
9. Elegant and Energetic Feats of Posturing  
and Gymnastics..... Nathans & Child
10. The Courier of Misselough, on his four  
beautiful Shetlands..... Master Jesse Sands
11. Animated and Artistic Feats of Tumbling,  
Vaulting, and Somersaulting..... by the Company
12. Comic and Patriotic Change Act..... G. W. Sangster
13. Lofly and Daring Feats, "En Perche," by Messrs. Fisher & Day
14. Performances..... by the TRAINED ELEPHANT CHARLEY
15. The whole to conclude with a COMIC AFTER-PIECE.

**An entire change of performance in the Evening.**

The 1855 program of the Sands, Nathans and Co. Circus indicates that John Nathans was still performing at that time. Pfening Archives.

was one of the riders. It was her last year on the bills; in December of 1875 she gave birth to John Avery Nathans. Two years later she presented J.J. with a daughter, Mabel Jay, and yet a third child, Elizabeth Lucy, a year or so later. Elizabeth Lucy died at two and a half months.

June, Nathans & Co. was closed on Long Island in July, 1875, perhaps because of poor business, but possibly because June and Nathans and Bailey and Avery Smith had been approached by P.T. Barnum to manage his circus beginning in 1876.

As is well-known, P.T. Barnum and his partner, W.C. Coup had a parting in 1876 and Barnum, in casting about for someone to manage his circus, convinced the second generation of "Flatfoots," Smith, Bailey, Nathans and June, to take on the task. Thus, these experienced showmen reached the pinnacle of their careers—at least in terms of notoriety. As they had in the past, they divided the tasks among themselves, and for half of the profits guided the Greatest Show on Earth from 1876 to 1880.

Avery Smith died in December, 1876, and the others maintained the contract without him. Barnum suggested that the agreement be amended since there were now three partners instead of four, but the "Flatfoots" stood firm and he relented. The arrangement was good for the participants; the three shared \$56,300 in 1877; \$53,269 in 1878; \$36,541 in 1879 and \$87,850 in 1880.<sup>6</sup>









# Star Back Review

*Outrageous Good Fortune*, by Michael Burke (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1984).

He calls the book *Outrageous Good Fortune*, and that seems to be a fair description of one whose career included management posts with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, Madison Square Garden, the New York Yankees, and the Columbia Broadcasting System. That is not to mention Michael Burke's spy-thriller stints with the OSS and CIA.

But his stay with Ringling was more outrage than good fortune for him. Michael Bailey Burke—the middle name added by John Ringling North to make it circus—came to the show at its lowest point, ran into trouble as formidable as that he had earlier with Russian spies, and departed under an unsatisfactory arrangement with North. Burke was with it in 1955 and 1956. He came shortly after Frank McClosky rose to power, put McClosky and the Sneez Mob off the show, took the circus home after its Pittsburgh collapse, and left when Art Concello came back to make it an arena show.

Burke's book reveals telling new details about the demise of the tented Ringling show. The names are significant—McClosky, Walter Kernan, Willis Lawson, Lloyd Morgan, plus other show people who are recognizable but not always named in the book. Also there were Jimmy Blue Eyes, Joe Karsh and Jimmy Hoffa. Any student of the Ringling saga must have this book for the version it tells of those trying times. Some have said Burke was one of the problems; he identifies a different one.

Burke met Henry Ringling North in war-time navy and OSS work. In Paris they palled around with Ernest Hemingway. North brought Burke to the circus much later; Brother John hired him without saying the circus was nearly a million dollars in debt and ridden with rackets and personnel problems.

I met Burke in Chicago in 1955. John North had complained about my writings for *The Billboard*, and Roger Littleford thought we should share comments on the status of the circus. Burke made it a trio. Nothing came of the session. More, nothing came of the



Michael Burke in 1955 when he was manager of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Robert Hasson Collection.

Chicago engagement, a time when the whole circus world was certain North would fire McClosky.

But that event did come a few days later at St. Paul, with Burke handling the heavy roll. He did put the Sneez Mob off the lot, and the show barely got itself to the next stand. I have heard several of the principal participants describe what happened that rainy night; Michael Burke's version sheds new light on it, reveals more details.

Then he turns to the Teamsters' strong-arm efforts to unionize the show. Burke describes breaking a Teamster roadblock at San Francisco, subsequent threats from the union, a meeting with Hoffa at Miami, and stoppage of trucks carrying dirt for the Garden floor. Rocks

**Uncle Gus and the Circus is available from Copeland MacAllister, 118 Beacon St., Framingham, Mass. 01701, price \$10.75. Outrageous Good Fortune is available from any bookstore, price \$19.95. The Circus World of Willie Sells is available from the Shawnee County Historical Society, Box 56, Topeka, Kansas 66601, price \$7.95.**

fell on show trucks, sand turned up in gas tanks, and circus drivers were beaten. Burke blames Hoffa's union toughs for the violence, loss of performances and for much of the blame in the ultimate collapse at Pittsburgh. That is new; common assessment heretofore was to blame mismanagement by the circus.

Perhaps even more significant, Burke charges that the departed and disgruntled Sneez Mob was responsible for bringing Hoffa and company into the picture.

With Concello returning, there was no place for Burke on the show. He claims that John North failed to carry out the deal promised for Burke's departure. But one detects that, now retired in Ireland, Burke remains close to the Norths, at least Buddy and John North II.

This is barely a circus book; only 30-odd pages are devoted to the Ringling connection. But two points persist. Those few pages are necessary to any circus historian. And the rest of the book is excellent reading. Whether it be Ringling or CBS, OSS, CIA, the Yankees or the Garden, Michael Burke tells a whale of a story of his *Outrageous Good Fortune*.

Tom Parkinson

*The Circus World of Willie Sells*, by Orin C. King (Topeka, Kansas: Shawnee County Historical Society, 1983).

This is an unusual book in that it combines the circus history of a city with a biography of its leading circus personality. The city is Topeka, Kansas, and the man is Willie Sells. In the first seventy-eight pages Mr. King gives us a very thorough view of the shows that played the town. These range from Spalding & Rogers in 1858 to Pawnee Bill in 1907. The wording of the advertising, the newspaper comments and even some of the ads are presented. Following this, all the Topeka-based circuses and the residents of the place who were in the business are chronicled.

Had he stopped with that, King would have had a fine book and one which does justice to his research effort. How-





ever, on page 79 he launches into a fascinating account of Topeka's best-known and most notorious showman, the indefatigable Willie Sells.

Sells was the adopted son of Allen Sells of the famous Columbus, Ohio show family. He was one of those people to whom things happen, usually on the order of disasters. Early on he was an outstanding rider and with his father's assistance became a circus proprietor. The names of the shows he was interested in are familiar to all of us, Sells & Gray, Sells & Downs, Sells & Rentfrow, even Sells-Floto. A sharp dresser and a blatant opportunist, Willie was the quintessential showman; he was incapable of admitting that things weren't going right. Most men take a bath or two in show business and quit, but Willie, with his father's money behind him, tried again and again.

For some reason he was wont to surround himself with grifters and short-changers, perhaps they were the only ones who could stand him. He always presented his shows as if his uncles were supporting him, which led them to go to court several times to hush him up. He was fairly litigious (which may be like saying slightly pregnant) and seems, from the account, to have been in court almost as much as he was on the lot. Not a successful man, in ordinary terms, he survived from season to season by means of his smile and his name.

King carefully documents all the travail of this rather busy, almost bizarre life. The family quarrels, the wills, the bankrupt shows are listed in detail. In fact, there's a lesson for historians in this book in that the value of local newspapers, court documents and city directories is constantly apparent. King has done a fine job of mining them. Any siz-

able city offers the same opportunity to anyone willing to do the reading.

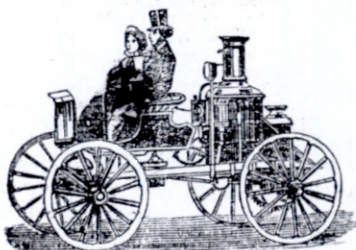
This is a valuable history of show business in Topeka and a fine biography of Willie Sells. We said at the top that this is an unusual book because it essentially combines two purposes. It is also unusual in that it works.

Stuart Thayer

*Uncle Gus and the Circus*, by Copeland MacAllister (Framingham, Mass.: the author, 1985).

In 1965 Copeland MacAllister turned from researching the history of the city of Boston to that of the American circus. This reviewer is pleased that he did so, for Cope is one of most conscientious and thorough researchers in the field. A few years ago some members of the

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HATCH & HITCHCOCK'S  
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The Mechanical Carriage will precede the combined Companies' Procession in town on the day of Exhibition, and be exhibited to the Circus audience with an explanation of the machinery, gratis.



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Has been introduced in this Exhibition, displaying all the **BARI & SPLENDORS OF THE HIPPODROME**, with the intrepid graces of the **MODERN ARENA**.

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Conant family of Acton, Massachusetts, asked him to look at some items one of their forebears had left. We must thank the Conants for doing this, for the material they asked MacAllister to inspect turned out to be the records of a late nineteenth-century circus man, Augustine Conant, the "Uncle Gus" of the title of this volume.

The collection consists of notebooks, receipts, routes and mortgages that delineate Conant's involvement with S.O. Wheeler and others in the late 1860's and the season of 1870. From these MacAllister has painstakingly pieced together a history of the Wheeler show and the leasing of its equipment after it left Wheeler's hands. Because Conant bankrolled Wheeler and was treasurer of the show, we can follow the income and expense over several seasons, the only such record that exists in so complete detail for the period.

Through these figures we follow the daily fortunes and misfortunes of a small nineteenth-century circus, something we have only had bits and pieces of prior to MacAllister's work. In 1868, Wheeler's International Circus, touring Maine, ran into a streak of bad weather. Through Conant's notes we can see the show slowly come to grief as day-to-day expenses overwhelm what little is taken in at the ticket wagon. Toward the end (in Bangor on May 18) they could not even afford to put the employees up in hotels.

Conant took the Wheeler equipment and horses in lieu of his mortgage and for over a year attempted to sell them. He finally used the residue as leasehold to other entrepreneurs and we again follow the fortunes of Conant as he travelled with and kept accounts for the Great Australian Circus and Nixon's two shows of 1870. MacAllister's reconstruction of the travels of these outfits is a credit to his perseverance. They were not large shows, thus news of them was not published in the usual sources.

The author notes that there is not such a complete record of a circus prior to the Barnum show of 1871 and we believe his assessment is correct. It is fortunate for those of us who appreciate this kind of material that a) the Conant family looked about for someone to analyze it, and b) that they chose Cope MacAllister as that someone, for he has done a fine job in putting it all together as well as in writing this volume.

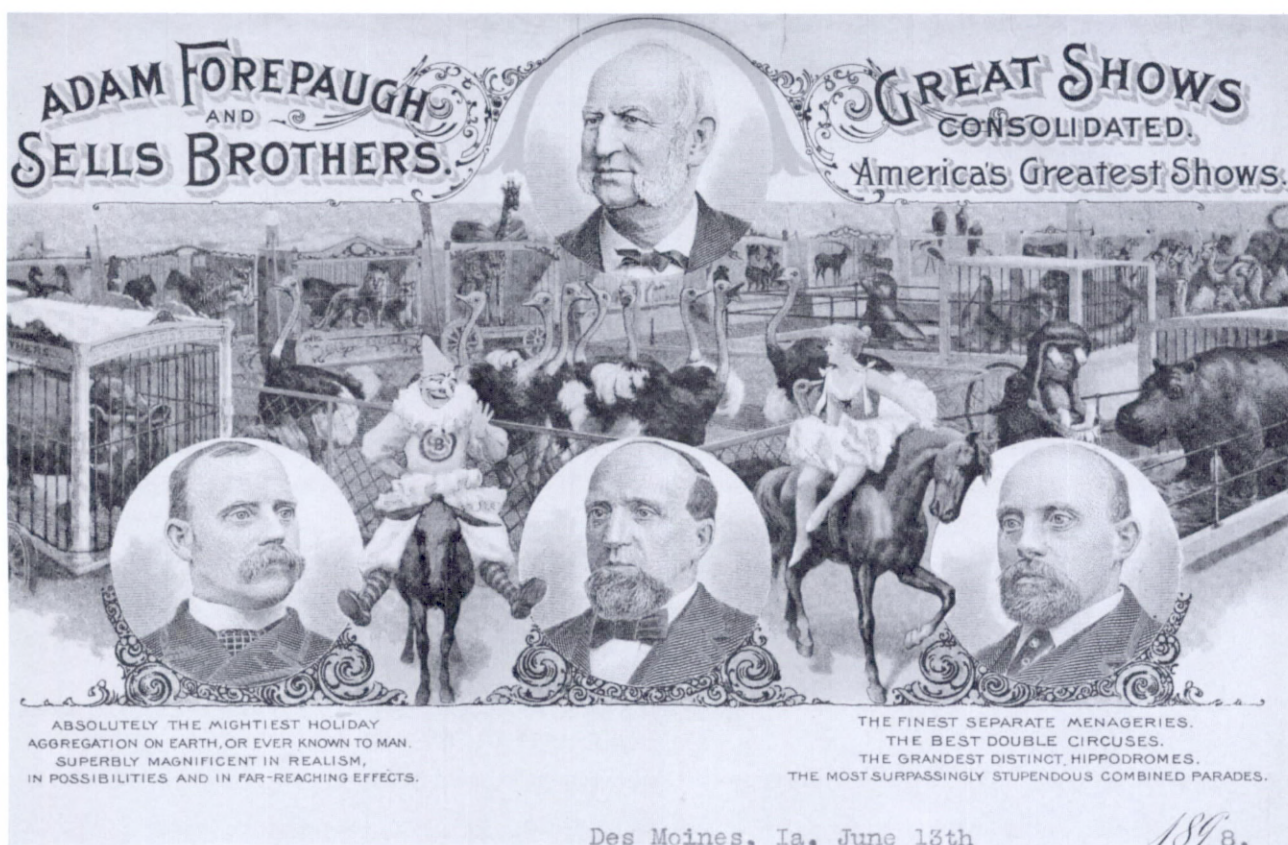
Stuart Thayer

#### Errata

At least two errors appeared in the season's review which appeared in the last issue of *Bandwagon*. James Hertzner produced the *Diary Mart Circus* at the *Monongolia County Fair*, not the *West Virginia State Fair* as reported. *CHS David Orr* set the date. *Hamid-Morton* opened their 1984 season in *Roanoke, Virginia*, not *Joplin, Missouri* as stated in the article.



# BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS



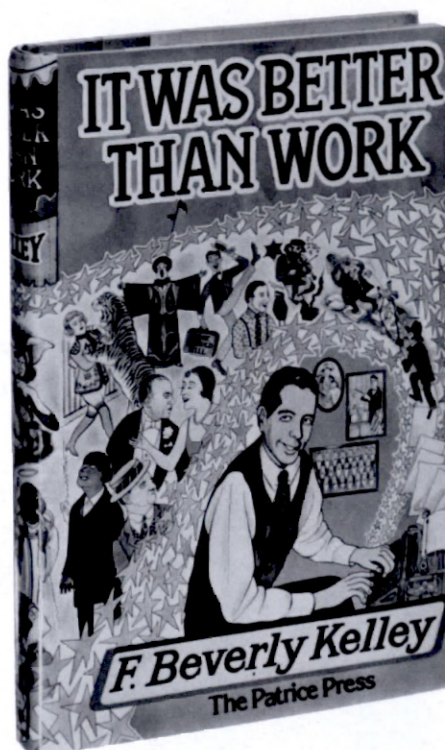
This selection of letterheads illustrates the transition of a design over a four year period. From its first year in 1872 until 1894 the Sells Bros. used various letterhead designs using steel engravings produced by the Strobridge Litho Co. All were attractive, but were printed in one color, usually black. In 1895 Strobridge printed the first full color paper for the Sells Bros. This letterhead, upper left, showed a full color menagerie, with the engravings of the owners in black. During the winter of 1895-96 James A. Bailey acquired one-third interest in the show in exchange for use of the Adam Forepaugh title.

The letterhead was reworked using the Forepaugh title and engraving for the 1896 season. The lower 1898 letterhead changed the color title and wording to black. During these same years the show also used a completely different letterhead designed and printed by the U.S. Printing Co.



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